

Figure 1

史上最受讀者歡迎古典經典
一則幕止即幕生
讀者一生最動人的國語主
完美典藏典藏

威風

天衣有风
著

五週年紀念
典藏版

Figure 1

史上最愛國者歡迎古典音樂

THE

讀者：牛樹德、張國明、王

10

天衣有风
著

鳳鳴

五週年紀念
典藏版

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lang="en">

A Tale of Two Phoenixes - Chapter 01-32

Table of Contents

1. [Chapter 1: Uncontainable Beauty](#)
2. [Chapter 2: My Soul Is Still Here \(I\)](#)
3. [Chapter 3: My Soul Is Still Here \(II\)](#)
4. [Chapter 4: An Elegant Young Man](#)
5. [Chapter 5: Bid Goodbye to the Past](#)
6. [Chapter 6: Afraid of Wasting Springtime](#)
7. [Chapter 7: Fragrant Beauty \(I\)](#)
8. [Chapter 8: Fragrant Beauty \(II\)](#)
9. [Chapter 9: Keeping Calm in All Situations](#)
10. [Chapter 10: Green Bamboos with Buttonwoods](#)
11. [Chapter 11: Expose the Hidden with Evidence](#)
12. [Chapter 12: Plaything's Game](#)
13. [Chapter 13: Young Man Jiang's Talents Have Not Been Used Up](#)

14. [Chapter 14: Killing Three Birds With One Stone](#)
15. [Chapter 15: An Overt Plot Between Fingertips](#)
16. [Chapter 16: The Strongest is the Easiest to Break](#)
17. [Chapter 17: A Real Snob](#)
18. [Chapter 18: The World is a Furnace](#)
19. [Chapter 19: Racing Madly on the Streets](#)
20. [Chapter 20: Beasts Oh Beasts](#)
21. [Chapter 21: Last-Minute Cramming](#)
22. [Chapter 22: Three-Day Heart-Lock Pill](#)
23. [Chapter 23: Fragrance Filling the Bed](#)
24. [Chapter 24: Toasted Wine and Punished Wine](#)
25. [Chapter 25: The New Ninja Turtle](#)
26. [Chapter 26: Flowing Water Yet Not A Poetry Banquet](#)
27. [Chapter 27: A Gathering of Handsome Men](#)

- 28. [Chapter 28: The Wang Family Had Yizhi](#)
- 29. [Chapter 29: Exquisite Thinking](#)
- 30. [Chapter 30: Able to Come Up with a Thousand Lines on a War Horse About to Go Off to Battle](#)
- 31. [Chapter 31: Thou Was Originally an Excellent Person](#)
- 32. [Chapter 32: Master Thousand-Gold Xiao](#)

Chapter 1: Uncontainable Beauty

[Previous Chapter]

What’s scarier than waking up and finding a naked man sleeping besides you?
Five naked men.

This is the situation that Chu Yu is facing now.

Waking up from her beauty sleep, Chu Yu was faintly aware of the presence of another human. She propped up her sleepy body, opened her still hazy eyes, and randomly, or even casually looked towards her side.

Someone was sleeping comfortably.

She thought it was a joke played by her friend.

But this one glance, made Chu Yu felt as if struck by lightning, and all the coziness and leisure vanished.

The youth sleeping besides Chu Yu looked to be about seventeen or eighteen years old, with long, ebony hair covering his smooth shoulders. He had graceful features, dark bushy brows, and lips like the blossoms of March.

This youth was as dazzling as a girl, but no matter how beautiful, he is still a man.

Any normal girl, when waking up to find an unclad man sleeping besides her, probably wouldn’t be pleased, even if this youth was extremely attractive.

Her brain, which had been muddled because of her sleep, instantly exploded into clarity. Then she realized, even more shockingly, that her body under the quilt was also completely unclad — no wonder she kept thinking that something felt wrong.

Despite the shock, Chu Yu began to feel humiliated, the feeling suddenly amplifying. Her whole body began to tremble in this humiliation!

Whatever in the world was going on?

Now did Chu Yu realize that the quilt on her was made of very delicate silk, with exquisite embroideries. And the bed underneath was big enough for her to roll at will.

Who is this youth? Why is he sleeping here? And why does she not have any clothes on?

Grinding her teeth, Chu Yu was about to wake the youth up, but was interrupted by a slight moaning behind her.

Her body froze.

Slowly turning around, slowly shifting her gaze, she saw another unclad man lying behind her. Finally, Chu Yu couldn't control herself to stay calm.

Shock, horrification, humiliation; complicated yet intense emotions surged in Chu Yu's chest. The sudden changes were too bizarre, so much that her mind blanked out, and in the end she just let out a low, suppressed scream: "Ahhh—!" She hugged the silk quilt tightly to conceal her naked body.

Aroused by Chu Yu's scream, the two youths beside her quickly opened their eyes, and after the two youths sat up, Chu Yu saw that three other youths climbed up from the ground one after another. They all had only a thin sheet of woven silk wrapped around them, which slid to the ground as they got up, revealing their naked bodies.

Chu Yu felt her vision go dark, almost fainting, but thanks to her good self-control, she ordered herself that this wasn't the time to lose consciousness. Even so, she still couldn't help but feel absent-minded: one, two, three, four, five, there was actually five unclad men. What's this? The site of a 6p¹?

Why would such an absurd scene appear before *her* eyes?

Chu Yu bit her lip hard, her teeth sinking into her soft lips. The slight pain helped Chu Yu calm down, making her mind clear.

While Chu Yu came back to her senses, four of the five youths had already knelt down by the bed orderly. The youth still standing was the youth that Chu Yu saw first. He swiftly reached out, pulling down the loose garment hanging from a screen; the loose piece of clothing stretched out like the wings of a butterfly, and settled on his smooth, slender figure.

The sound of the garment slicing through the air broke the dead silence.

This youth was the only person in the room that could be said had clothes on, so Chu Yu let her not-knowing-where-to-put gaze reluctantly fall on him.

Then did Chu Yu notice, that the clothing was big and loose, very classically made; the material was a pure white color, but the collar and the ends of the sleeves had a decorative black edge of about one and a half inch wide, and on the edges were fine embroideries that seemed to reflect a dark light.

With the garment on, the youth's magnanimity immediately became known. He looked like he was only seventeen or eighteen, had beautiful features and a slight sense of childlike innocence; but the expression in his eyes was so elegant, like the blue skies and white clouds, the rolling hills and rushing streams.

When he had his eyes closed, he seemed beautiful, but when he opened his eyes, all Chu Yu could notice was that his expression was so elegant and unattainable, as if the gentle beauty had been entirely washed away by the exorbitant spirit.

Who is he?

The youth, holding the collars of the garment together with one hand and stroking his hair behind his neck with the other, tilted his head to smile softly at Chu Yu. Compared to the kneeling position of the other four, the youth seemed to have a succinct liberty. Others knelt, he stood. He was the only person in the room that could look Chu Yu in the eye equally.

The youth slowly approached, parts of his garment rim dragging across the clean floor. He looked at Chu Yu gently: "Is everything alright, Princess? Did you have a nightmare?"

An extravagant, sweet smell floated in the air, but Chu Yu suddenly began to feel chills running down her spine. Even in this room where it was warm like spring, she couldn't help but tremble.

Maybe..... This wasn't a joke at all?

1. 6p: a six-way love affair (between six people).↩

[Previous Chapter]

Chapter 2: My Soul Is Still Here (I)

She was in a bedroom.

Filled with numerous elaborate and delicate decorations, the room was graceful and enchanting. A gilded phoenix lantern hang on the wall, and both the screen and the tea table were dignified and elegant. Everything wore an antique style.

As to why she started to suspect that this wasn't a joke was because after Chu Yu came to her senses, she remembered that in any case she should be dead now.

Before waking up, the last thing that clogged in her memory was a plane accident. That wasn't any good memory, but she had to face it.

Her plane crashed, then she found herself in this strange place, sleeping beside five naked youths, no injuries on her body, everything in the room were unrealistically antique and refined, and her hands.....

Chu Yu stared at her hands. These weren't her hands at all! Dainty, pale, and delicate, the tender skin had no signs of scars or rough calluses. These hands were treated so well, that it definitely wasn't Chu Yu's hands — her hands that were slender and strong, hands that accompanied her to the mountain peaks and into the primitive forests.

This was the greatest flaw, also the best evidence.

This wasn't a joke. In all the people that she knew, no one could carry out such a big joke.

During her lifetime, Chu Yu also used to read the popular light novels online during her spare time. Some of them did have plots involving time travel, the taking of other's bodies, and resurrecting the dead, but although they were creative and interesting, Chu Yu never considered them to be true. She just thought of them as wild imaginations. But when undeniable evidence was placed before her, Chu Yu recalled this impossible possibility.

Unfamiliar environment, unfamiliar youths, and an unfamiliar body.

Besides time travel, Chu Yu couldn't think of any other plausible explanation.

Chu Yu felt her vision go dark, almost fainting. Her heart contracted violently. She couldn't deal with this huge change, but she forced herself to accept reality, and to start thinking.

The youth had a weird accent, and his pronunciation was distinctively different from modern Chinese, as if it were some dialect, but not any that Chu Yu knows of. But the strange thing is, Chu Yu can still understand it perfectly, as if she were fluent with this pronunciation all along.

Chu Yu knew that after the the adaptation of thousands of years, the pronunciation of ancient Chinese is different from modern Chinese. But this isn't the important thing. What she wanted to know now was: Who is she? Where is she? And during what time period?

Bombarded by extreme panic and at a loss, but pressed to the line by reason, Chu Yu suddenly felt as unperturbed as a computer, as if reason was extracted to form another soul, coldly observing and considering.

This youth addressed her as Princess. Judging by his clothing, he probably wasn't from the Qing Dynasty or the Yuan Dynasty, so these two dynasties could be eliminated first. But was she really a Princess?

Thinking quickly, several thoughts flashed through Chu Yu's mind in a split second. She ordered in as steady a voice as she could maintain, "All of you, get up, and put your clothes on." She regretted as soon as she said so, for what if they noticed that the pronunciation was different? But right afterwards she also realized that her words, whether in tone or pronunciation, had also changed along with this body.

The matter about the change in her pronunciation could be put till later, because Chu Yu saw clearly, that after she told the four youths to get up, a spark of surprise flashed across the black irises of the youth that had been standing. Although it was gone in a split second, still it was caught by the sensitive Chu Yu.

Did she say the wrong thing?

Her heart rate increasing, Chu Yu guessed worriedly. But after the spark of

surprisement flashed through the youth's eyes, he put on a smiling face. "The Princess seems a little different today." Then he tilted his head and commanded the four youths, "You all can leave now. We will summon you if needed."

His words seemed to have much prestige. When Chu Yu had told them to stop kneeling, the four youths stayed where they were, but once hearing his command, they stood up and clothed themselves. Chu Yu even heard one of them give a sigh of relief. This made her feel even more suspicious and disturbed.

The four walked around the screen in front of the entrance and left, leaving only Chu Yu and the haughty-looking youth in the room. Even though the youth appeared innocent and harmless, Chu Yu still felt very uneasy. She spoke quietly, "You also go out." What she needed was space for her to calm down, and since the youth called her Princess, she believed she had at least some authority.

"Princess?" The youth was stunned, as if totally not expecting that he would also receive such treatment. His expression also changed, as if accusing Chu Yu of doing something wrong. Chu Yu began to feel diffident under his gaze, but now she couldn't even settle herself, not to mention caring about how others felt.

After waiting for a while but not seeing Chu Yu revoke her order, the youth's expression became a little curious, and he nodded slightly: "Alright, Rong Zhi retires. But Princess, if there be any need, please feel free to summon Rong Zhi at any time."

Finishing his sentence, the youth who called himself Rong Zhi unhurriedly followed the footsteps of the other four youths and left the bedroom. His steps were neither fast nor slow, and his back looked solitary and chilling in the dim light. So different from his gentle countenance.

Afterwards, Chu Yu was left alone in the spacious room. Engulfed by loneliness and helplessness, Chu Yu took a couple of deep breaths to suppress the weakness breeding in her chest.

Even when she found herself lost in primitive forests, searching for a path out alone in the dark, she never felt that her future was so bleak.

Because this has already exceeded what she was able to control.

Still wrapped in the silk quilt, Chu Yu subconsciously looked for clothing to conceal her body. On a square table not far from the bed, several pieces of clothing were folded neatly. The layer upon layer even made Chu Yu a bit dizzy, not knowing which to put on first.

Not giving Chu Yu time to think more, the timid voice of a girl sounded from outside the entrance, “Princess, You Lan is here to help you get dressed.”

At first Chu Yu didn’t want to acknowledge it, but she changed her mind. She pressed her lips and called out in a bright voice, “Come in.”

Chapter 3: My Soul Is Still Here (II)

Walking around the screen blocking the entrance, a pretty but timid girl about fifteen or sixteen entered Chu Yu's eyes. She was the person who called herself You Lan. The young girl named You Lan wore a light blue quju¹, carried a bronze basin, and was followed by two more girls. Each of the two other girls held a folded towel and followed behind You Lan with their heads bowed.

When You Lan walked in, she first glanced at Chu Yu carefully, then set the basin down on the six-footed basin rack by the wall.

Chu Yu stopped her from wetting the towel she took from the other two girls and ordered, "You two, go out..... You, You Lan, can stay." Chu Yu felt weird trying to call out You Lan's name in an experienced tone.

The two young girls dared not to dissent, bowed slightly then backed out the entrance slowly. Chu Yu instructed You Lan in a cold voice, "You, come over here, closer."

A dash of uneasiness flashed across You Lan's expression. She slowly moved to the bed and knelt down uprightly, afraid to infuriate Chu Yu.

The young girl's fearful attitude comforted Chu Yu's flustered heart. When facing the youth named Rong Zhi, his neither humble nor aggressive attitude made Chu Yu unable to grasp and control the situation. If she wanted to know who she was, where this is, the fastest way would be to inquire the people around her. But Chu Yu was a cautious and careful person. She knew that her questions might invoke suspicions, and Rong Zhi did not look like someone that could be easily fooled. Under comparison, the fearful and trepid You Lan would be a better target for interrogation.

Chu Yu never thought that she would have this day, when she was so scared and panicked that she needed to obtain courage and confidence from others' fear. But the reality was so.

She needed courage, to help her face all this.

Calming down her emotions, Chu Yu smiled slightly, "You Lan, let me ask you,

how old are you now?”

You Lan looked a bit scared. She answered timidly, “Reporting to the Princess, sixteen.”

Chu Yu pondered for a moment. “How long have you been here, serving me?”

“Three months.”

Ingeniously guiding, asking about random subjects, after a while Chu Yu finally turned to the topic: “I’m going to ask you a few questions. If you answer them well, I will treat you well, but if you dare to lie me or fool me, then beware..... look at me when replying!” For the last sentence, she suddenly raised her voice, speaking in a cold tone. Deterrence.

Different people require different ways to deal with. Although scaring a girl younger than herself wasn’t nice, Chu Yu didn’t have the heart to care about that now.

The last shout made You Lan shudder in fear. She dared not protest, and raised her head timidly to look at Chu Yu, “Please ask, Princess.”

Seeing the effect she was attempting to achieve, Chu Yu softened her voice, and cut directly into the topic, “Who am I?”

You Lan stared back blankly, not understanding why Chu Yu would ask such a question, “You’re the Princess?”

Chu Yu cursed in her heart, you guys keep calling me Princess how could I not know that? She pointed out the important point: “What I’m asking is my name. I want you to say it out loud.”

You Lan immediately bowed down to the ground, “You Lan dare not say the Princess’s name out loud.”

Chu Yu replied lightly, “Say it, for I tell you to. I won’t punish you for this.” She was very anxious to know the answer, but had to pretend to be casual about it, not letting her anxiety show.

“Princess.....” The voice was conflicted.

As You Lan hesitated, Chu Yu grew more and more impatient, finally exploding: “Say it!”

Chu Yu's stern shout sent a tremble through You Lan. Still kneeling on the ground, she replied quickly: "Princess is named Liu Chuyu title Shanyin."

The Princess of Shanyin, Liu Chuyu?!

One second.

In this length of one second, Chu Yu's brain was blank. Even her eyes seemed to lose their sight for a moment.

The Princess of Shanyin..... Liu Chuyu?

In history, this person did exist. Chu Yu knew who Liu Chuyu was.

During this time period, there was Pan An, Wei Jie, Mu Rongchong, Du Guxin, Lanling King, Ji Kang, Wang Xizhi², and..... The Princess of Shanyin Liu Chuyu.

Most of the princesses in history only had titles but no names recorded. But the Princess of Shanyin Liu Chuyu, a princess born in the Song Kingdom of the Southern Dynasties, had her name passed from generation to generation, all the way down for more than a thousand years. It wasn't anything nice though. The name of Liu Chuyu has been nailed to the pole of adultery more than a thousand years ago in disgrace.

The most famous deed of this princess was her words to her younger brother Liu Ziyi when he became emperor. She told him, "Although your highness and I are different sexes, we are the children of the same father. Why can you sleep with so many different women, while I must be only with my husband? This is so unfair!"

Even though many women slept around privately in the dissolute court, nobody dared to openly ask the emperor for men like the Princess of Shanyin. Never before in history nor after in the future; this could only be called fierce! And extremely fierce!

Not even the daughter of the U.S. president dared do so, but more than a thousand years ago the Princess of Shanyin did. She not only did so, she did so "righteously".

And after the younger brother Liu Ziyi as emperor heard his elder sister's words, he ridiculously thought it made sense. So he immediately corrected his

“wrong ways” and painstakingly selected thirty handsome youths for her to enjoy.

For Chu Yu, the identity of the Princess of Shanyin was not the top priority. She even almost forgot the shame and humiliation moments ago. After she learned of the time period she was in from others’ mouths, her whole spirit began to shake, as if the entire world around her started to collapse.

More than a thousand years!

How frightening time can be!

This body wasn’t hers anymore, and the environment also underwent huge changes.

Maybe she should be satisfied, because when she should have been dead, life took such a turn to resurrect her. This life, could be said was totally by chance.

But.....

Her family her friends her everything are so far away now, far enough that even if Chu Yu used all her might to extend her arms, even extending until they broke, she still had no way of reaching the shadows of the twenty-first century, more than a thousand years later.

Father’s stern yet caring inquiries, mother’s loving rambles, brothers and sisters’ occasional contacts, friends’ happy expressions..... all gone.

What surging disaster.

So many loved ones and memories, cut mercilessly by the blade of time.

Pain overwhelmed her.

1. Quju: 曲裾, a type of traditional Chinese clothing.↵
2. Pan An, Wei Jie, Mu Rongchong, Du Guxin, Lanling King, Ji Kang, Wang Xizhi: 潘安, 卫玠, 慕容冲, 独孤信, 兰陵王, 嵇康, 王羲之; list of Chinese men in history, the first five were all famous for their handsome appearances.↵

Chapter 4: An Elegant Young Man

The Princess of Shanyin has changed, as if it's a totally new person.

Within a few days, everyone in the palace of the Princess had this new insight.

Starting from that morning when she drove all five of the male concubines serving her away, when even her favorite Rong Zhi hadn't been able to stay, the Princess of Shanyin had suddenly changed.

She no longer indulged in pleasure throughout the days, but instead locked herself in her room; she didn't even let people enter to wait upon her, only allowing You Lan and several other maids in to bring her her meals and take care of her daily life. She wouldn't even see the male concubines that used to be inseparable with her. A few male concubines requested to see her, but all were refused.

It was like this for five days in a row.

On the sixth day, one of her male concubines couldn't restrain himself anymore.

Liu Se was one of the male concubines in the Princess of Shanyin's harem. He was seventeen this year, with delicate and charming features. He liked to wear Harlequin clothes, and his brows looked coquettish. The day Chu Yu changed he didn't get the chance to serve her, and these days all his requests to see Chu Yu were blocked out, so he started suspecting and guessing, and couldn't resist to go find Rong Zhi.

The Princess' palace was divided into the East Wing and the West Wing. Chu Yu, as the noble Princess, resided in the East Wing; the opposing West Wing, was left for her husband and male concubines.

When Liu Se found Rong Zhi, Rong Zhi was sitting under the buttonwood tree in the courtyard, holding a bamboo book in his hand, reading intently.

Liu Se had came relatively later. When he arrived, Rong Zhi was already serving beside the Princess of Shanyin. How favorable Rong Zhi was in the eyes of the Princess of Shanyin was unbelievable. She not only granted him the best

courtyard in the West Wing, but also because Rong Zhi loved reading, ordered people to search and collect rare books for him everywhere.

Moreover, she dismissed Rong Zhi of all etiquettes, so Rong Zhi didn't need to salute to her.

Rong Zhi's appearance wasn't the most beautiful or elegant of all the male concubines, and he wasn't respectful or careful around the Princess of Shanyin either. But no matter how beautiful the male concubines that arrived later were, the favor the Princess of Shanyin showed to Rong Zhi didn't lessen even a bit.

Both Rong Zhi's origin and identity were a mystery to the multitude of male concubines; they didn't know the background of this youth. They only knew that the position Rong Zhi held in the Princess of Shanyin's heart was very important. One sentence of Rong Zhi could worth more than their hundreds of sentences, and whatever the Princess of Shanyin was thinking Rong Zhi knew by just one glance.

Over the past several days the Princess of Shanyin's temperament changed dramatically, leaving the male concubines in her palace speculating endlessly, not knowing what she was up to. Liu Se was from a poor family, only becoming a male concubine of the Princess of Shanyin by his looks. Although this identity was despised by many, it was very useful; because of his identity, his elder brother became a low rank official, and was living comfortably. Therefore, when the Princess of Shanyin stopped summoning them for pleasure, Liu Se became very worried that he will lose favor in her eyes.

But Chu Yu had people guarding the entrance, and Liu Se didn't dare force his way in either. So the only way was to find the Rong Zhi whom he disliked.

Reaching Snowfall Gardens, a solitary and silent feeling overwhelmed Liu Se. Following the twisted path, walking around the pavilions, Liu Se found Rong Zhi seated under the buttonwood tree.

Rong Zhi was concentratedly reading the bamboo book with his head down. The elegant silhouette of his side figure was gentle like the luster of a jade, appearing between branches and leaves. He looked so at ease and comfortable; the Princess of Shanyin's refusal to see anyone didn't seem to have the slightest effect on him.

Liu Se stepped on the pebbles of the flowered path, sending out slight sounds, lacerating the silence that had filled the yard. Rong Zhi lifted his head, his hand holding the bamboo book paused, and turned his head over. He smiled slightly at Liu Se, “Is there something that you need?”

To come and seek help from someone he had disliked all along, Liu Se felt conflicted. But he even accepted the position of a male concubine, so how would he be stopped by this conflicted feeling. Only hesitating for a moment, he opened up: “I would like you to go see the Princess. For all these days, the Princess has locked herself up, and she no longer summons us either. Don’t you think it’s odd?”

Rong Zhi stood up slowly, holding the closed bamboo book in one hand. The loose sleeve of his snowy white garment hanged downwards, swaying slightly in the wind, as slow and light as the clouds and as gentle and soft as the moon. Liu Se watched on enviously. These fabrics woven with snow silk were extremely rare; the entire Princess’ palace had only two units. But just because the name of the quarters Rong Zhi resided in contained the word “snow”, the Princess of Shanyin gave all the fabrics to Rong Zhi for him to make into garments to wear.

It wasn’t just because of the name, Liu Se believed. Even if every single one of them had the word “snow” in their names, the Princess of Shanyin wouldn’t even grant them a thread of snow silk.

If the small West Wing of the Princess’ palace was a harem, then the Princess’ husband would be like the Queen. But the concubine that had the real power and the most favor would be Rong Zhi, while the rest of them, no matter how many, will be the embellishments of Rong Zhi’s blinding radiance.

Rong Zhi placed the bamboo book into his loose sleeve, then smiled, “The Princess naturally has her own plans, so why shall we bother her, adding to her troubles?”

Liu Se became angry, and couldn’t resist saying, “Of course you don’t need to worry, but we.....” Then he stopped in the middle of the sentence.

When he realized he had expressed the unwillingness and resentment deep in his heart, Liu Se regretted. Although he disliked Rong Zhi, he still knew the position he held in the palace. Rong Zhi could determine his fate with just one

sentence..... It was unwise to get hotheaded now.

But he couldn't suppress it.

He hated Rong Zhi.

His expression was always so graceful, like the ice caps on the top of mountain peaks. Everytime Liu Se saw it, he couldn't help but feel ashamed.

They were both male concubines. Why can Rong Zhi look so pure and good?

Rong Zhi let out a chuckle. He didn't seem to mind Liu Se's anger a bit, but instead walked steadily towards the entrance. "Okay. Then I'll do as you say, and go visit the Princess."

Walking out the West Wing, passing through the middle court, Rong Zhi's graceful figure arrived at the East Wing and reached the bedroom of the Princess of Shanyin. Since Rong Zhi had the privilege of going anywhere he wanted in the palace, the guards at the entrance didn't hold him back but let him pass.

Standing in front of the closed doors, Rong Zhi's smooth and pretty chin lifted slightly. But his brows showed that he was lost in thought, hesitating.

Yes, he was the one who knew the Princess the most, and also the one who was most favored. But on that morning, after the Princess screamed, he realized that he suddenly couldn't understand the beautiful girl anymore.

Rong Zhi frowned slightly. Thinking back about what happened that day, when he was awoken by the shriek, the first thing he saw was the beautiful girl's horrified, flustered, confused, and even..... expression, the expression in her eyes.....

Rong Zhi lifted his face and took in a deep breath. A wry smile appeared on the corner of his lips.

He really didn't want to think about it.

Chapter 5: Bid Goodbye to the Past

Collecting his thoughts, Rong Zhi focused his gaze on the door in front of him.

As a matter of fact, he had also been wondering these days. He saw the abnormalities of the Princess clearer than anyone else; he was just steady and calm, good at controlling himself, so he didn't show his anxiety like others such as Liu Se.

When Liu Se came to him today, it suddenly came to his mind that among all the people in the Princess' palace, if even he wasn't willing to probe out what happened to the Princess, then no one would dare to be the first to put on this risk.

Rong Zhi sighed and pushed the door open.

Inside the room was dark, cold, and silent. The lights weren't on, and even the incense that the Princess loved wasn't lit.

Rong Zhi couldn't help frowning.

When light from outside shone into the room, accompanying the sound of the turning of the doorknob, Rong Zhi heard a low voice from behind the broad screen, "Who's there."

It was obviously a familiar voice, yet strange at the same time.

The soft, gentle, and slightly hoarse tone. He had heard it numerous times, but not once before, was it so, so.....

As if it came from a very far away place; it was calm, determined, introverted, and had the relief of a rebirth.

At that moment, Rong Zhi thought he had arrived at another world, and met another person.

"Who's there." Maybe because of the long silence and the person behind the screen didn't get a reply, she asked again.

Rong Zhi stood by the entrance, extended his arm to push the screen blocking the door. But he ran out of the strength to push it further after just a few inches.

A ray of light shone in through the not big opening, and Rong Zhi, lowering his head and gazing at his slender hands, sighed lightly, "It's me, Princess. I'm Rong Zhi."

He slowly walked inside. After going around another screen, he saw the Princess' bedroom. Not surprisingly, but also kind of surprisingly, he found Chu Yu on the bed.

Although she was already married, and has recruited a multitude of male concubines, the Princess of Shanyin still had the face and age of a young girl. What came into Rong Zhi's eyes was the beautiful girl, clad in dark clothing, her long, ebony hair hanging like satin, sitting beside the bed.

In the dark, the young girl's beauty was still a graceful one that could deceive many. But her eyes were cold and clear, so different from the attractive, shallow smile Rong Zhi was familiar with.

At the same time Rong Zhi realized, that just after a few days of separation, the Princess' delicate face had become a lot more clear cut. He wondered in his heart: whatever in the world happened to the Princess of Shanyin?

"It's you." Chu Yu took a glance at Rong Zhi. This youth was still so elegant and graceful, his manner was still so leisurely and indifferent, exactly the way it was the first day she arrived here. He didn't wear a hair cap¹, only putting his ebony hair up in a bun, secured with hawksbill turtle shell bob.

But the Chu Yu now was not as panicky as she was a few days ago. She could even calmly examine the youth, observe his appearance, and ponder his identity.

Although she was kind of depressed by the habits of the Princess of Shanyin, Chu Yu had to admit that this woman's aesthetics were good. If she didn't know that Rong Zhi was a male concubine, she would probably mistake this exquisite youth as some noble's son.

"How did you come in?" Chu Yu raised her brows. If she remembered clearly, did she not order people to guard the entrance, and told them that she wasn't going to see anyone? Were the guards taking a nap?

Rong Zhi didn't answer. He took two steps forward, standing three strides away from Chu Yu, and said gently, "Princess, you haven't left this room for

some time now. We are all very worried.....”

Chu Yu replied indifferently, “Worry about what?”

Rong Zhi smiled, still laid back and serene as moonlight and streams. His tone was also very leisurely and peaceful, even casual, “Worried about wasting springtime. Not long later, when summer approaches, it won’t be fun anymore.”

Chu Yu was expecting for him to say worried about her body, but he gave such words. Regaining senses from her astonishment, she also couldn’t help smiling, “You’re right. Time flies by; it’s true that I shouldn’t lock myself up like this the whole time.”

Rong Zhi’s irises flashed. He said, “Actually, Rong Zhi is very curious too. What has the Princess been thinking about during all this time in the room?”

“What have I thought about?” Chu Yu lifted her face slightly, a beautiful curve forming from her chin to her collar. She laughed relaxedly, “I thought about a lot. The past, the present; saying goodbye to what couldn’t be retrieved, giving up on what I shall never again see in my life; accept what has already happened, face what is not a dream.” As the Chu Yu of the twenty-first century, all she had, was gone the moment she opened her eyes.

Her family, friends, familiar environment, and her life.

If lost, the most important thing would be to calm down. Do not run around wildly like a fly without a head². Calmly observe your surroundings, make the decision that would best benefit you, and decisively take action.

Even if it’s travelling through space and time, and getting lost on the road of history, it should still be the same.

Except that getting lost on this road made her lose too much. That she had to spend five whole days to organize her thoughts.

Panic, shock, pain, bewilderment, consciousness, calmness, abandonment, decisiveness, pondering.

Dead, yet alive again.

Can’t return, so what should she do?

Look herself in the face and face the present.

Tearing apart the wounds numbed by pain, letting the calm operation knife of thoughts cut slowly.

From not knowing what to do to sorting her thoughts into organized details, Chu Yu's soul underwent a grounding experience like the rebirth of a phoenix. The process couldn't be said as painless, but the good thing was that it's already done now.

But even though she prepared herself to face reality and composed her emotions, out of instinctive procrastination and fear of the unknown surroundings outside Chu Yu still didn't want to push the door open and step outside.

Until Rong Zhi entered the room.

He pushed the door open, letting sunshine in, and at the same time pushed open the door that wasn't willing to open in heart.

Chu Yu stood up.

She didn't have shoes on. Bare feet and hair down, walking on the smooth and icy floor, coldness rushed from beneath her feet into her body, making Chu Yu even more conscious and determined.

She walked to the entrance, and going around the slanted table plaque, a huge scene of spring welcomed her. New sprouts of green came into her sight, and the soft yet clear sunshine brightened the darkest corner of her heart, sweeping away the depressing atmosphere. Chu Yu felt that she had just seen the light.

What a beautiful scenery! All these days that she locked herself inside the room, she had also locked this excellent scene out of the room.

She turned her head to face Rong Zhi, and told him wholeheartedly, "Thanks." The bright sunshine shone upon her elegant face, making her pale skin look as if it's half transparent.

If it weren't for him to enter, heaven knows how long she was going to procrastinate.

It wasn't the Princess of Shanyin Liu Chuyu saying thanks. It was the other Chu Yu, the one from another place more than a thousand years later, the one that

penetrated time like water, and the one that overcame obstacles that could not be overcome.

1. Hair cap: an object in ancient china that holds a man's hair up.↵
2. A fly without a head: Chinese idiom for people who do things crazily without thinking them through.↵

Chapter 6: Afraid of Wasting Springtime

“Yue Jiefei, come on a walk with me.” Chu Yu beckoned to the youth clad in blue, tight warrior clothing. She didn’t wait for his reply before stepping onto the crooked pebble path.

The youth named Yue Jiefei had a tall and handsome frame. His tight-fitting clothes also showed off his beautiful long legs, narrow waist, and broad shoulders. Although he didn’t have the prettiest face in the world, he had a soaring handsomeness.

Chu Yu still remembered that when she just arrived in this world, the first time she left the room, Yue Jiefei materialized beside her as if a ghost. She almost had a heart attack, but later she found out that Yue Jiefei was her personal bodyguard and she calmed down, realizing that this was probably the legendary QingGong¹, appearing and disappearing at will.

Every time she left her room, Yue Jiefei would immediately appear beside her, no matter day or night. Similarly, no matter what time, whenever Chu Yu returned to her room, Yue Jiefei would automatically disappear, not wasting a single second. Chu Yu had attempted to suddenly burst out of the room early in the morning, but the moment she stepped out of the entrance, she would see the very recognizable broad shoulders narrow waist and long legs beside her. Chu Yu had to admit that the protection Yue Jiefei gave her was 24/7 without any vacations.

Chu Yu had been wondering to herself that by providing such close protection, where did Yue Jiefei usually rest? Did he sleep on her roof everyday? What will happen if it rained? It’s a shame that ever since Chu Yu travelled through time, all the showers fell during midnight, when she was deep asleep; so of course she couldn’t climb up to get answers.

Ever since she decided to face life, Chu Yu opened her arms to enjoy all that originally belonged to the Princess of Shanyin. The land that the Princess’ palace took up could be described as vast, as if land didn’t even cost money. In her previous life, every inch of land cost a fortune in the modern cities, extremely

expensive. Some people work for their entire lives to save up for a single apartment, but right now, when Chu Yu looked out, the pavilions, the gardens, the woods, the rockery, everything was her territory. Every time Chu Yu thought about this she was elated.

And the clothing and food for the Princess was more luxurious than imaginable, too. Thirty to forty dishes was the most basic breakfast or midnight snack, while lunch or dinner consisted of at least a hundred dishes. And this was when Chu Yu ate by herself. As for clothing, everyday was unique. All brand-new, and not any two days did she wear the same thing. Chu Yu had asked You Lan about it before, and learned that all those exquisite garments, the Princess of Shanyin usually only put on once; after she wore them they were sent to a warehouse and collected dust. Chu Yu felt sorry for them.

After getting used to life without modern technology, especially without computers, Chu Yu lived an extremely comfortable life.

“Luxurious, so luxurious!” Chu Yu exclaimed while enjoying the material comforts brought by her time travel resurrection. She embraced everything her new identity owned, except one — Men.

Although she stepped out of the room, Chu Yu didn’t go anywhere far. She had forgotten to renounce her ban, so all the male concubines that came to see her were still prohibited from entering like they were a few days ago. Until today, Chu Yu still didn’t see a single male concubine of the Princess of Shanyin’s besides Rong Zhi; although there were four others on the day she first woke up, their faces were blurry in Chu Yu’s brain.

With good food, good drink, and good sleep, Chu Yu devoted all her attention into tasting the natural and unpolluted foods of the ancient times. Excess nutrition speedily made up for the thinning a few days ago caused by her depression: in just a couple of days, Chu Yu’s cheek returned to its gentle and moving luster. If she kept on eating like this, she suspected that her body shape would move towards expanding horizontally.

So Chu Yu stopped. Not only was it to keep her figure, but also to exercise her body, and to meet some of the other people living in the Princess’ palace.

And a very important part of that was those male concubines.

It had been raining last night. Although one whole day had passed, cool moisture still persisted between the pebbles paving the path. A beautiful green covered the new leaves on the trees in the courtyard; such a fresh color could only exist in the spring seasons of Jiangnan².

After just two or three steps, Chu Yu realized that if she, as the Princess, eagerly went to visit her own male concubines, that would probably be too weird. She paused her steps to summon You Lan, and told her that she was going to set up a Spring Banquet in the palace.

You Lan asked carefully: “Are we still going to let Sir Rong arrange it, like usual?” As far as she knows, many important things inside the Princess’ palace were assigned to Rong Zhi to manage.

Chu Yu hesitated for just a second, then nodded her head, smiling, “Yes, let him arrange it.” Now that she was still unfamiliar with most of everything, assigning the matter to an experienced person would be the easiest. But at the same time Chu Yu pondered in her heart, wondering, did the Princess of Shanyin give Rong Zhi *too* much authority and privileges? Not only can he ignore her bans and walk anywhere in the palace, he also administered many of the Princess of Shanyin’s businesses. There must something about him that was different from the crowd of male concubines.

But Chu Yu wasn’t planning to take any action right now. Anything should be planned detailedly before carrying out, so she decided to continue considering for some time.

Right after Chu Yu released her order, Rong Zhi went to execute it. He was quite efficient; after only half an hour, the banquet opened in the middle of a forest of apricot trees. Between a profuse array of flowers and trees, two rows consisting of short tables measuring one Chinese foot tall spread out; on top were food and wine. All the beautiful or handsome youths seated themselves one by one.

Chu Yu quietly sat at the head of the banquet. As the Princess, she had no need to arrive so early, but Chu Yu had been plotting her own scheme, so she let You Lan lead her here, and was one of the first ones to be seated. Sitting on the

brocade cushion behind the long bench, she silently watched the entrance of the courtyard; she observed every single guest, and judged them with her own eyes.

During this time period, although chairs had already been introduced from the nomadic tribes, they weren't popular yet. When people needed to do something, such as conversing, doing business, or eating, they knelt. And it was the type which the two legs were placed together and the heels touched the buttocks.

Therefore, when the Princess held a banquet, even if it's the Princess herself, she still had to kneel.

Chu Yu shifted her legs, stiff from kneeling, to lessen the numbness; at the same time cursing this time period which chairs hadn't become popular yet. Although a soft cushion was placed under her legs, after being sat on by the weight of her body for a long time and blood circulation slowed down, this was still a very painful thing.

After only a short period of kneeling, Chu Yu couldn't bear it anymore. But when she turned her head to look at Rong Zhi, who had already finished dealing with all the trivial stuff and was now seated at the head of the right side of the table, his expression was peaceful and mild, not showing any sense of discomfort. She twitched her mouth: How come all these ancient people wouldn't feel numb from the kneeling? Or was it that too much numbness made them used to the numbness?

Chu Yu had only had a little bit of time to let her imagination fly, for people were starting to get seated, and she diverted her attention.

1. QingGong: 轻功, a skill which allows one to jump really far/high, almost like flying. Supposedly part of the ancient Chinese Kung Fu, but more likely made up... We don't know if it really existed or not.↵

2. Jiangnan: 江南, a geographic area in China referring to lands immediately to the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, including the southern part of the Yangtze Delta; literal tl: south of (the) river.↵

Chapter 7: Fragrant Beauty (I)

Grand! So grand!

Luxurious! So luxurious!

One two three four, five six seven eight, nine ten eleven..... Although history books recorded that the Princess of Shanyin Liu Chuyu had thirty male concubines that were granted to her on one order by the emperor, the truth wasn't so. Chu Yu had asked You Lan before; there were only a total of twenty-four male concubines in the Princess' palace, and although half of them were granted by the emperor, the other half were carefully selected and plundered here from all kinds of places by the Princess of Shanyin herself.

Among them was Rong Zhi, who was the earliest one brought into the palace by the Princess of Shanyin.

All kinds of beautiful youths and handsome teenagers appeared from the courtyard entrance, that Chu Yu couldn't stop exclaiming in her heart. And she once again confirmed that the aesthetics of the Princess not only had a very noble taste, but it also inclined towards diversity: almost every type had two or three, and there still were differences in specifics among a type. The variety of styles contributed to such a colorful scene.

The Princess of Shanyin was like a picky collector, continuously collecting artworks lacked in her home. She only wanted two or three of each style, but made sure that each type was complete while at the same time having a diversity of styles.

She had thought that Rong Zhi was very beautiful, but after seeing the other male concubines, Chu Yu finally understood the proverb of there's always mightier people and broader skies¹. Ignoring the their temperaments and just talking about physical appearances, there were more than a few that were better looking than Rong Zhi.

The ages of these men ranged from teenagers to a little over twenty. Among the numerous, Chu Yu spotted a child that seemed to be only eleven or twelve.

that child was cute and adorable, with long and raised eye lashes; his round black eyes glistened, and his cheeks looked tender enough to squeeze water out of it. Her head buzzing, Chu Yu forced herself to stay calm, and nonchalantly asked Rong Zhi, who was still beside her, “By the way, how old is he this year?” Her hand pointed towards the child.

“Twelve.” Rong Zhi’s reply made Chu Yu’s head buzz again. How could the Princess of Shanyin be so inhumane! This child was just twelve, yet she still shamelessly ruined him..... Although this child did have the face that attracts people to ruin him, and although the Princess of Shanyin was young too, as she was only seventeen or eighteen, but twelve years old, twelve..... By doing so she is destroying the young sprouts of her mother country!

Looking at all the others, they were all pretty young. Chu Yu shook her head: apparently the Princess of Shanyin wasn’t fond of all ages; she had a strong habit of eating new grass².

Including Rong Zhi, there were twenty-four male concubines; two said they were sick, so Rong Zhi told Chu Yu they couldn’t come. But whether it’s they really couldn’t come or they didn’t want to for some other reason, Chu Yu had no way of knowing. She could only laugh in her heart and note their names in her head. The Princess of Shanyin’s husband, He Ji, wasn’t at the palace either. It’s kind of a shame that all these days since she came here, Chu Yu didn’t even get see her new body’s true spouse. But considering the facts from this point of view, it is obvious that the Princess of Shanyin and her husband weren’t close — of course, no matter what man, if his wife was intimate with other men in his presence, they wouldn’t be close or affectionate with each other.

Poor He Ji..... Staring at the two rows of beautiful youths and handsome teenagers, Chu Yu couldn’t help but pity that man she never met. The green hats³ on his head probably stacked up to the height of a building.

The ones who arrived last at the banquet were two coquettish and pretty youths. One of them wore fuchsia garments, and the other was clad in Harlequin clothes. They walked towards Chu Yu side by side. At this time Chu Yu had just reached for her cup to taste some fruit wine, but not giving her time to savor the drink, this red and green pair approached, leaving her almost choking. She

hurriedly lowered her head, forced herself to gulp down the wine, then lifted it up to face the crowd again.

Chu Yu licked her lips. Giving up on drinking, she looked at the two youths with those dazzling colors: both were absolutely gorgeous beauties. But..... red with green, whoever could have made up that match?

The coquettish youth dressed in Harlequin was the one who begged Rong Zhi to go see the Princess, Liu Se. When he heard that the Princess was going to host a banquet in the woods, he hurriedly showered, dressed up, and even applied make-up, leading to his slightly late arrival. The other slightly late guest just happened to be Mo Xiang, the male concubine whom he was always fighting with over the Princess's attention.

The two came from two different paths. When they met at an intersection, seeing the other was also elaborately dressed, they shot hateful glances at each other. Unwilling to lag behind the other, both increased paces and arrived at the banquet at almost the same time.

If someone were to ask Liu Se who in the Princess's palace he disliked the most, it would be neither the Princess's husband, He Ji, nor the Princess's favorite, Rong Zhi, but this Mo Xiang.

He Ji was a hopeless husband, posing no threat whatsoever to them. While Rong Zhi was extremely favored by the Princess, he was usually graceful and pretty low-key. Except sporadically asking the Princess for a couple of books, he never asked or fought for anything. Everything he had was given voluntarily by the Princess. Rather than hating and resenting, Liu Se's attitude towards Rong Zhi was more of an unreachable, unattainable feeling plus despair and envy.

On the other hand, Mo Xiang could directly threaten Liu Se's interest. Therefore he hates Mo Xiang the most.

Everyone in the palace knew that when the Princess of Shanyin picked out male concubines, she disliked having too many repeats. Therefore the more special or unique one was, the more favored he would be. Liu Se and Mo Xiang were both a very good sight for sore eyes. Although Liu Se was somewhat more good-looking, Mo Xiang had one distinguishing feature that he didn't possess. This became Mo Xiang's most useful weapon and his greatest capital.

At this time, there were still two empty spots. Yet both youths saluted Chu Yu without even glancing at the spots, then split two ways, went around the table and sat down besides Chu Yu.

The instance the two neared her, Chu Yu detected a soft and sweet aroma. The fragrance was different from her incenses; it contained no smell of smoke or fire, and it was longer and more good-natured than the smell of flowers. It even carried a vague warmth.

After thinking for a bit, Chu Yu suddenly thought of a possibility. She tilted her head and glanced at Mo Xiang. Probably because of hurrying on the way here, Mo Xiang had small droplets of sweat on his forehead and the tip of his nose; as the breeze blew past, it brought a burst of aroma with it.

During the Qing Dynasty, there was a stunningly beautiful girl in Xinjiang who had delicate fragrance coming from within her. She fascinated the emperor QianLong, and was known as the fragrant imperial concubine. What Chu Yu didn't realize was that more than a thousand years ago, during the Southern Song Dynasty, there was also a such, except in male form and residing in the harem of the Princess of Shanyin.

Chu Yu now begin to admire the Princess of Shanyin a bit: due to the difference in physique and constitution of human bodies, very very few were born with the ability to emit fragrance. Yet such a rare person had been found by the Princess of Shanyin, the handsome-male-collector, and placed into her harem.

1. There's always mightier people and broader skies: 人外有人天外有天, Chinese proverb that means there will always be somebody greater than one or better at something than one.↵

2. Eating new grass: 啃嫩草, means dating or having a relationship with a younger person; usually in the case of an older girl with a younger boy.↵

3. Green hat: a symbol of spouse's unloyalty.↵

Chapter 8: Fragrant Beauty (II)

Liu Se and Mo Xiang also noticed that Chu Yu was different from before. Not daring to get too close, they cautiously kept a distance of more than a foot and knelt down at one Chu Yu's two sides to wait upon her. What Liu Se didn't expect was for Chu Yu to immediately turn her head towards Mo Xiang and look at him incessantly, completely ignoring him.

Compared to Mo Xiang's rejoicing, Liu Se cursed in his heart, but he couldn't show it. Usually, at this type of gatherings, he and Mo Xiang would always wait upon the Princess on her two sides. Although Mo Xiang would always fight for the Princess's attention with him, his better looks would not let him down; he would never have been neglected like this. But today.....

As Liu Se dwelled in his anger, Chu Yu continued to stare at Mo Xiang. Moments before she only thought their match of colors was amusing, so she didn't pay notice to their countenances. Now, as she examined them closely, Chu Yu couldn't help but be amazed. Seducing features, the corners of his eyes curving upward, giving off sweet fragrance, with perfect skin, his pores invisible even at such a close distance. Such a beauty must be rare on earth. Except, uh..... doesn't it seem a little too weak for a man? She now felt her gender identity had been flipped. This man was even more coquettish than most women! Chu Yu almost started thinking that she was the man, and this seducing youth before her was the one hundred percent female woman.

So the Princess of Shanyin was into this type? Chu Yu pondered in her heart. She glanced around at the others at the banquet, but when her eyes fell on Rong Zhi, she vetoed such a thought. A male concubine as well, Rong Zhi's elegant demeanor was so distinctly different from that of Mo Xiang and Liu Se. The others at the banquet also had all kinds of dispositions and appearances.

Their attitude towards Chu Yu were also different. Some, like Liu Se and Mo Xiang, were attentive in every possible way; some not so earnest; still others, with stiff complexions and resistant looks, were obviously forced into becoming male concubines, refusing to surrender.

Yet among all these, the most unique one was Rong Zhi. His expression was so leisurely, calm, and mild, as if all the commotion around had nothing to do with him; as if he were alone, strolling in the quiet woods.

“Princess.” The voice showing slight resentment reminded Chu Yu of Liu Se. She turned her head, and saw Liu Se holding a glass cup with both hands, his enchanting facial features, his watering lips opening lightly, “Princess, when you shut yourself in your room a few days ago, Liu Se was so worried about you. Liu Se didn’t know what else to do, so Liu Se begged Rong Zhi to go see you. Please don’t punish Liu Se for that.”

As she examined him so closely, Chu Yu realized that Liu Se’s looks were even better than Mo Xiang’s, like the most gaudy clump of a sea of spring Liu Ses. Charming, big eyes; long, dense eyelashes; seducing lips; collar slightly opened, exposing a small patch of his pale and smooth chest; and under the shadow of his collar, beautiful collar bones..... In two words, stunningly beautiful.

The good thing was she had just been staring at Mo Xiang, so she possessed some immunity. Or else she might have gaffed right then and there. Pulling herself together, Chu Yu lifted her brows slightly, and casually replied, “Oh. So you asked Rong Zhi to come see me. Why didn’t you come yourself?”

Liu Se paused for a moment, but then smiled, “Princess, are you joking with Liu Se? How dare we trespass when you have forbade us to see you?” He then shifted to a complaintive tone, “Princess, you’re not being fair. Rong Zhi can see you whenever he wants, but Liu Se has wait when missing you.”

Glancing over Chu Yu’s shoulder, Liu Se could see Mo Xiang sneering. Their sights meeting, Mo Xiang disdainfully lifted his head, and mouthed: “Don’t think I don’t know what you’re planning. Haven’t you always wanted to enjoy the same privileges as Rong Zhi?” Since the first time Mo Xiang and Liu Se met, they’ve been competing against each other. They both completely understood the other’s thoughts, so the second Liu Se spit out these words full of implied meanings, Mo Xiang knew what he was scheming.

Ignoring him, Liu Se smiled sweetly at Chu Yu, kind of to piss Mo Xiang off.

After giving it a moment of thought, Chu Yu said slowly, “You’re right.....” As she paused between words, Liu Se felt his heart suddenly beat faster. Originally,

he didn't expect to receive the same treatment as Rong Zhi, just hoping to use this as an excuse to request some benefits. But now, listening to Chu Yu's tone, she seemed to approve his words. Liu Se couldn't help but become nervous, guessing that maybe the Princess was going to give him the same privileges as Rong Zhi?

After the short pause, Chu Yu smiled, then continued, "You're right. I should treat everyone equally." Just when Liu Se mentally prepared himself to movingly thank the Princess and express his utmost gratitude, he heard the Princess speak lightly, "From now on, cancel every privilege Rong Zhi has in this palace. Then everyone would be equal."

The instance these words left her mouth, nearly everyone at the banquet reacted.

Liu Se was caught on surprise, and extremely disturbed. He had not expected that not only he didn't receive any benefits, but his words led to Rong Zhi losing all his privileges. This probably wouldn't affect Rong Zhi's position in the palace, but would it mean that Rong Zhi would bear a grudge on him from now on?

In addition, Rong Zhi was very well respected by many of the male concubines. If he was harmed by him, Liu Se would probably become the target of a joint alliance formed by a majority of the people.

Liu Se started panicking. What he just not only hurt others, didn't benefit himself, and could even attract enemies for himself. Such an unwise move.

In contrast to Liu Se's restlessness, Mo Xiang was rather chuckling to himself.

The reactions from the others at the banquet were different too. Some looked at Chu Yu indignantly, some glared hatefully at Liu Se, still a few others gloated and looked satisfied by the arrangement.....

Chu Yu lowered her gaze, a smile flashing across her face. Just one sentence, yet it seemed like a boulder sinking into the water, evoking turbulent waves. Sudden and unexpected changes can often catch people off guard, resulting in unconcealed reactions. And these reactions were just what Chu Yu needed to initially determine their attitudes toward the Princess and Rong Zhi.

Chapter 9: Keeping Calm in All Situations

Even though she acquired some basic information from conversations with You Lan, Chu Yu still refrained herself from asking too much to prevent arousing suspicion. Furthermore, what You Lan told her was just the world from the viewpoint of a little servant girl. To know what the situation really looked like, Chu Yu had to determine for herself.

Among the many people at the banquet, there were two that Chu Yu kept her eyes on. One sat on the least prominent seat on the left hand side. That youth looked to be slightly older than Rong Zhi, about twenty-one or twenty-two. He was thin and handsome, but ever since he entered courtyard, he was low-spirited and solitary.

His expression and manner fit badly with the spring garden. Under the blue sky and white clouds, there was only this small area of darkness and shadows; therefore it was very catching to the eye.

Up until when Chu Yu said she was going to dismiss Rong Zhi's privileges, he didn't even look at her, not even the slightest glance, as if looking at Chu Yu would stain his eyes.

After Chu Yu said it, she had been pay attention to his attitude. Sure enough, the very depressed youth had a reaction. He looked up at Chu Yu with a stunned and somewhat disdainful and indignant expression; but he suppressed his emotions and didn't speak. Coldness flashed across his eyes. Then he turned away again.

But among all the people, the most astonishing to Chu Yu, was Rong Zhi.

When Chu Yu ordered the dismissal of Rong Zhi's privileges, Rong Zhi was in the middle of lifting a cup to drink. Hearing Chu Yu's words, there was absolutely no flicker of emotion or pausing of action; he just elegantly sipped some wine, gently placed the cup down, and leisurely turned towards Chu Yu, smiling, "Yes."

Some were indignant for him, some were gloating over him. But he seemed completely unaware of all this, no wait, he was aware, just not minding it. That

calmness, was an almost luxurious elegance, graceful as the HeShibi¹; it was lucky if one could witness such, for it could not be wished for, it just comes along.

As if any chaos or mess, when brought before him, would become sorted and organized.

After carefully examining everyone's response, Chu Yu smiled lightly, "I was joking. Don't take it seriously." Before figuring out Rong Zhi's background and identity, she wasn't going to make any big changes. The words she just spoke were only to probe around. The crowd's reactions didn't disappoint Chu Yu's expectations; except Rong Zhi.

This youth was like an interesting book. With each flip of the pages, new information would be disclosed. Until now, Chu Yu still couldn't tell how many pages this book had.

Hearing Chu Yu say so, the rock on Liu Se's heart was lifted. He rejoiced for being saved, and calculated in his heart whether he should go and be nice to Rong Zhi to prevent him from bearing a grudge against him. Contrastingly, disappointment appeared between Mo Xiang's delicate brows.

Yet Rong Zhi was still gentle and calm as the white clouds floating in the sky. Underneath the blossoming trees, the youth in snowy white clothes smiled again and responded, "Yes."

This was supposed to be a banquet, but Chu Yu was busy observing the people, so pretty much she didn't eat anything. Even if the food went into her mouth, she didn't taste them. She sporadically spoke to examine the crowd's reactions, and used their reactions to judge them.

Since Chu Yu ate absent-mindedly, most of the male concubines also weren't at peace. Some tried to guess what this princess was up to, and ate even less than Chu Yu.

After not seeing her these past days, the change in the princess was way too big. Although there was no difference in her appearance, her expression had transformed. Underneath the deceptively elegant countenance of the young girl seated at the most prominent seat, wasn't the usual half-drunken smiles; now

she smiled infrequently and shallowly, but also decisively; the gazes from her eyes, clear as water, landed on every single one of them, as if wanting to penetrate them.

It was as if, she had become a totally different person.

Not that Chu Yu didn't know the confusion of the group, but she didn't care. Ever since she found out her identity and position from You Lan, she became at ease.

As long as she was careful, and avoided leaving proof, so what if people suspected her? Who could pull out the evidence to accuse her of not being the real Liu Chuyu? Who dared question her, such a highly statused princess? So what if she was different from before? If she wanted to change, who was qualified to intervene?

Plus, if at the last second, she still had the card of amnesia that she could play out.

Throughout history and across countries, ninety percent of the main characters in time travel and body possession novels pretended to have amnesia. But for Chu Yu, she would only use it when she had no other choice.

Using amnesia to fake innocence, depending on others to perceive her surroundings, led on by others, and unable to wrestle control in times of problems; this was not Chu Yu's style.

But Chu Yu had some trust in the Princess of Shanyin's despotic power: in this entire palace, there must be no one that dared to question her..... Except Rong Zhi.

This youth, was the one person that Chu Yu was most worried about at the moment.

According to what Chu Yu had first planned, all of the male concubines would have been dismissed immediately. Of course pretty youths were pleasing to the eyes; but after all, she wasn't the Princess of Shanyin. She didn't have that kind of need, so it's best to not ruin the futures of these good boys.

Through observation, Chu Yu discovered that Rong Zhi held a special position in the heart of the Princess of Shanyin and all the male concubines. In addition,

Rong Zhi's identity and background were both a mystery; he didn't seem to be forced into becoming a male concubine, but his attitude towards Chu Yu was never fawning either. He even enjoyed the privilege of complete freedom in the palace, yet he was never arrogant or conceited. Perhaps only the real Princess of Shanyin knew who Rong Zhi was.

He looked as if he wanted nothing. Therefore, Chu Yu felt that he was unfathomable.

The banquet ended after one hour. Chu Yu declared the end of the banquet, but since she didn't move, how could anyone dare to leave before the princess. So now there's this awkward situation where everyone sat silently in their seats and stared at each other.

Chu Yu spoke. "I want to stay here for a little longer. You all can leave now."

After these words, still no one moved. At first Chu Yu didn't know why, but thinking about it, she understood: this Princess of Shanyin probably had a bad record, using similar methods to trick them, so these people are now so careful.

As she was trying to come up with a way to persuade them, someone chuckled quietly. Chu Yu looked up, and saw that it was Rong Zhi. Rong Zhi lifted his cup, raised it towards Chu Yu, and drank all its contents. He then stood up and left gracefully.

Following Rong Zhi, the beautiful youth that disdained Chu Yu also left. With someone taking the lead, people would follow. Not long, and most of the banquet became empty. But the two pretty youths besides Chu Yu wouldn't leave. One beggingly and the other coquettishly, both looked at Chu Yu.

Chu Yu was helpless and amused. Of course she knew that these two youths were rivaling for favor, but too bad, she wasn't the Princess of Shanyin, so she couldn't settle that type of stuff. Having no other choice, she opened her mouth to shoo them away, "You two should also go. I want to have some alone time."

Mo Xiang and Liu Se looked at each other, shot glances of hostility, and carefully saluted Chu Yu. Only then did they leave, all the while dallying.

The two rows of seats were now empty. Even though she didn't really enjoy the banquet, the loneliness afterwards, like the ending a piece and people

scattering, still made Chu Yu feel a sense of loss.

The Princess's palace was rich and luxurious, letting the newly came Chu Yu mercilessly try everything. But all the decorated garments and delicious food, couldn't fill the emptiness in her chest.

Coming here, she payed the price of losing everything in her beforelife. Although she was the princess and enjoyed luxury, it doesn't mean that she was happier or freer than when living in modern times.

But Chu Yu didn't complain. She didn't self-pity. She didn't self-wound. After she cleared her thoughts, she turned her determined gaze forward.

In her blood flowed the toughness of life, the kind that would bloom in any type of situation. Even in this obscurantism more than a thousand years ago, it was able to blossom the most gorgeous of flowers.

This was a type of calmness, an elegance originating from the soul. It had nothing to do with physical enjoyments, nothing to do with her identity or position, nothing to do with things of this world, and nothing to do with time.

Chu Yu wiped her brows and looked towards the end of the apricot woods. Her gaze pierced through the red flower branches and white petals, reaching the blue sky and creamy clouds, distant and clear.

There will be a day when she would soar freely.

1. HeShibi: 和氏璧, or 和氏美玉, a famous piece of jade in Chinese history. Was regarded as priceless and a treasure of the world. [↩](#)

Chapter 10: Green Bamboos with Buttonwoods

Nearly everything had been cleared away. The long tables and seating cushions were also removed, only leaving the one in front of her, the princess.

The people were also gone, only leaving Yue Jiefei, who had been standing guard not far behind her. Chu Yu turned to see his tall and straight figure, then said: "Yue Jiefei, go keep watch in front, and don't look at me."

Yue Jiefei's expression suddenly became kind of strange. Whatever he was thinking, his face turned slightly red, then obediently stepped forward about ten steps.

Seeing Yue Jiefei blush, Chu Yu's face was green. Judging by the expression he just had on, did he think she was going to some dirty thing? The real reason why she asked the others to leave first, was only because.....

Her face downcast, Chu Yu struggled to move her body. Her hands on the ground for support, she liberated her two calves, which have been pressed under her body and now lost sensitivity. After sitting for so long, her legs were numb.

Clenching her fists, Chu Yu pounded on her legs. Pain like being stabbed by needles entered her skin and flesh, inch by inch. After rubbing her legs to wake up her long-oppressed blood vessels, and standing up to wobble a few steps, Chu Yu finally recovered a little. She also made up her mind to vigorously promote sitting chairs in the Princess's palace from today on.

After walking around a bit, Chu Yu could move freely. She let out her breath softly, then called out to Yue Jiefei, "Follow me, I want to stroll around a little." She had not examined the Princess's palace yet.

Yue Jiefei replied, "Yes. I will order them to bring the sedan chair over." Usually, if the Princess of Shanyin walked anything more than a few steps, people would carry her around in her sedan chair.

Chu Yu shook her head. "No need. You walking with me is good enough."

"Yes." Although Yue Jiefei agreed, his gaze floated around, dodging Chu Yu's eyes, as if Chu Yu was some type of human-eating wild beast. After a short while,

he asked, hesitating, “Princess, do you need me to call a few others to accompany us?”

Chu Yu paused, then looking at his expression, she suddenly understood. Looks like this chap was afraid that the beast inside her would come out when they were alone, and harass the “handsome nice next-door boy”, ruining him. Therefore he was so unwilling.

Compared to all those beautiful men on the Princess’s palace, Yue Jiefei Yue’s appearance couldn’t even cross the passing line. Chu Yu couldn’t help but admire his narcissism.

Not knowing whether she should get angry or amused, Chu Yu was about to explain. But then she thought, there was no need for it, so she started to exit the apricot woods, “Enough, shut up. Follow me.”

As she walked, Chu Yu silently made note of the topography and paths in the palace, slowly carving out a partial map of the Princess’s palace in her head. Partial because the Princess’s palace took up so much land, that after a full thirty minutes of walking, stopping, and sometimes enjoying the scenery, Chu Yu only finished half of the inner court.

The Princess’s palace was divided into the outer court and inner court, basically two layers. The division between the two layers was very strict. Only the most trusted maids and servants of the princess, her male concubines, and her husband could enter the inner court; while at the outer court, besides areas for playing and enjoyment, lived some menkes¹, officers of the palace, and the princess’s guards and private army. When Chu Yu first knew about the private armed soldiers at her palace, she was very astonished. Wouldn’t this lead to her being “accidentally killed” by the emperor? Later did she learn that during this time period, the powers of the emperor’s kin and nobles were very big, so they could even name their own officials at their palaces.

Since she wouldn’t be “accidentally killed”, and these matters had special people to manage, there was no need for her to look after them. Therefore Chu Yu didn’t bother about it further.

Even though they stopped frequently, after half an hour of standing and walking, Chu Yu still felt tired. She was unhappy with weakness of this body, but

this wasn't something that could be changed in one day. So she had to bear with it for now.

Leaning on a buttonwood for rest, Chu Yu wiped the sweat on her forehead with her sleeve. Around her were bamboos and sparsely planted buttonwoods, making her surroundings very elegant and pleasant. The light sounds resulting from wind blowing across leaves comforted the restlessness in Chu Yu's heart.

The Princess's palace was filled with greenery. The gardens and rockery were beautiful and presentable; streams and bridges, flowers and trees, appeared at every turn; although these were all pleasing to the eye, after looking at it for a long time, Chu Yu couldn't help but feel uninterested. But this forest of buttonwoods and bamboos was quiet and unique. It had a different kind of gracefulness and meaning.

Peering through the gaps between bamboos and branches, Chu Yu managed to identify a white wall standing ahead. Over the wall, there were more buttonwoods and bamboos. She called to Yue Jiefei, and asked casually, "Who lives around here?"

Yue Jiefei had no doubt in her inquiring, and replied without thinking, "This is Master Rong's Snow Shower Garden."

"Oh," Chu Yu acknowledged softly, then suddenly noticed someone approaching. Fixing her eyes on him, she saw a refined and handsome young man. He had on a high hat and a wide belt, and when he walked, his loose garments and broad sleeves flapped in the wind, giving him the appearance of an ancient scholar. He didn't notice Chu Yu hidden between the bamboos and buttonwoods, but hurried towards Snow Shower Garden. Pushing open the unlatched red lacquer doors, he walked straight inside.

Only then did Chu Yu realize that Snow Shower Garden didn't have guards around it, nor was there any means of security. It was because of this, that this place had such a refined and unworldly feeling.

Chu Yu had never seen that youth before. Now that he appeared in the inner court and his appearance was so handsome, his identity called out in Chu Yu's heart: either he was her not yet met husband, or he was one of the two male concubines that claimed sick.

Originally Chu Yu had suspected, how could things be so coincidental, that on such a nourishing and warm spring day, two of her male concubines dropped sick. But to know what was really going on, she needed find out and prove it herself.

While Chu Yu was debating what her next step should be, another person showed up. It was the solitary and depressed youth at the banquet. Just like the one before, he didn't see her, and also went towards Snow Shower Garden.

Chu Yu vaguely remembered that someone called him Jiang Yan at the banquet.

Hmm.

Chu Yu humphed lightly from her nose: she had just organized a Spring Banquet among the apricot woods, and now Rong Zhi was organizing a Little Spring Banquet on his territory?

Randomly ripping off a newly grown bamboo leaf, Chu Yu twined it around her fingertips. The soft leaf twisted with the movement of her fingers. Suddenly, a smile rippled out in Chu Yu eyes: very interesting.

Tossing away the teared apart leaf, she strided towards Snow Shower Garden.

1. Menke: 门客, a hanger-on of an aristocrat. Basically someone supported/sponsored by the wealthy and would provide help and advice in times of need.[↩](#)

Chapter 11: Expose the Hidden with Evidence

Inside Snow Shower Garden were more bamboos and buttonwoods. It was exceptionally silent between trees and branches, and fallen leaves and broken branches decayed on the ground, making it soft on the foot. The air was moist and fresh

According to Chu Yu's guess, Rong Zhi was probably with those two people, and maybe more that came in before them. They were probably gathered together in a dark room with Rong Zhi as their leader, seated in the center, and all the others around him, discussing and planning something bad with dark expressions.

Person 1 says: Hehehe.

Person 2 says: Like this and like this blah blah blah.

Person 3 says: This way our treacherous plan could succeed quack quack.

.....All the above is purely Chu Yu's exaggerated and silly imagination.

The truth was far from expected. Chu Yu quietly sneaked into the red doors like a thief, but after only two or three steps, she surprisedly saw the center of evil in her imagination leisurely resting on a bluestone platform under a buttonwood, holding up a bamboo scroll in his hands. When Chu Yu found him, he also noticed Chu Yu's arrival, and looked up.

In comparison to the layers of greens, Rong Zhi in his snowy white garment was extraordinarily distinct. Chu Yu stared at Rong Zhi, and Rong Zhi also gazed at Chu Yu. His black irises were too deep to percept, like a black hole at the end of the universe that could swallow everything, like the never reachable ice and snow at the highest of mountain peaks.

Twitching her mouth, Chu Yu returned to her senses. She looked around, but didn't see the two that came in earlier, so she turned back to look at Rong Zhi.

One standing, one sitting, sending thoughts and emotions to each other like conducting electricity across the distance of more than a foot. Probably because the conductivity between the two wasn't enough, besides her eyes getting tired,

Chu Yu didn't acquire anything else.

Maybe because he thought welcoming the princess like this wasn't acceptable, Rong Zhi slid the bamboo scroll into his sleeve.

Chu Yu twitched her lips again, and turned to head towards the pavilion behind the bamboo grove. Since those two weren't in the woods around them, they must be in the pavilion. Quickly walking out the bamboo grove, Chu Yu softened her steps. This time she wasn't disappointed: faint voices sounded from the two half shut screens ahead of her.

Slight noises came from behind her. Turning her head, she saw that Rong Zhi had followed her over. Chu Yu raised her brows, saying in her heart, so what are you going to do now? Make some noise to warn them? If Rong Zhi purposefully made loud noises, then good. That would give her more reason to suspect that the conversation inside was shady.

Rong Zhi smiled lightly. He blinked quickly, signaling for Chu Yu to follow him.

Shooting a glance back at Yue Jiefei, who had been following not far behind, Chu Yu placed her heart down. Curious about what Rong Zhi was up to, she softened her steps even more and followed him up to the window. At this time, the voices from inside the pavilion were already very clear.

When she first heard them, Chu Yu was a little excited. She thought she could get hold of some secrets. But when she was able to clearly perceive the conversation, she was disappointed.

Two sweet male voices sounded inside the room, one gentle and soft, the other energetic. When mingled together, they sounded exceptionally harmonious. Chu Yu peered in from a slit in the window. Two shadows were cast onto the ground, nearly completely overlapped; and the masters of the shadows were kneeling behind a table by another window. The two were leaning on each other's shoulders, looking at the spread out bamboo scroll on the table.

The unknown youth with a classical elegance was slightly taller. He stretched out his slender finger, pointing at somewhere on the bamboo scroll, and said to Jiang Yan, "What you just said, I don't really agree. Look here....." After that was his reasoning based on literary quotations.

Jiang Yan tilted his head. Sunlight shone in from the window, landing on his brows and side face, making his cold features gentle. Even though only a little spring air leaked into the room from the window, the Jiang Yan now, was as if entirely in springtime, so different from his appearance in the apricot woods.

The two were debating on a literary topic. Sometimes presenting their own arguments to the other, sometimes smiling and listening to the other speak, accompanied by slight nods of the head. But to Chu Yu, who couldn't really understand what they were discussing, all she felt was that pink, dreamy fog floating around and enveloping these two.

This atmosphere was way too dubious.

In her before life, in the twenty-first century, there was a culture that was popular on the internet, called BL. Basically novels and stories about two beautiful men falling in love with each other. Although Chu Yu knew a little about it, she wasn't that into it. What she didn't expect was that going back in time for more than a thousand years, she would meet alive cut sleeves¹.

Originally Chu Yu had wanted to pry out the secrets of Jiang Yan and the others, but now that she did pry out some secrets, it wasn't the type she wanted to. Like how a husband, planning to catch the adulterer with his wife, when lifting the quilt, saw two men in a huddle on the bed.

This gap between expectation and reality made Chu Yu very disappointed.

The conversation on literature between the two was too deep and professional; the more Chu Yu listened, the more confused and bored she became. Thinking that there's no point in continuing this, she decided to leave.

Thinking this, Chu Yu accidentally glanced towards Rong Zhi, who was standing on the other side of the window, but saw him listening intently. He was elegant already, but such an expression made him even more attractive. His black and moist irises were like the star-filled night sky: peaceful, profound, and beautiful.

After a while, the conversation between the two in the room reached a point of contradictory views. The debating voices suddenly escalated; only then did Chu Yu regain her senses. Seeing that Rong Zhi was still listening, she extended her hand and patted his shoulder, then pointed towards the woods, motioning

for him to go talk over there.

Entering the woods, the two stood across each other. Chu Yu gazed at him, but didn't speak. After a long pause, Rong Zhi started first; he sighed lightly, then said, "Since the Princess has already seen for herself, I shouldn't keep faking. Huan Yuan is not sick. When I said he was sick in bed, I was lying."

As he magnanimously acknowledged his lie, Chu Yu, after a pause, also made the connection between the beautiful youth with a high hat and wide belt and the name Huan Yuan. This name stood out to be one of the two male concubines that claimed to be ill and didn't show up to her banquet.

Chu Yu chuckled quietly: "How dare you." She revealed no emotion, neither happiness nor anger, so Rong Zhi couldn't guess her thoughts immediately. He sighed again and said in a low voice, "Huan Yuan has a stunning talent. Such people appear probably only once in a hundred years, so it's inevitable for him to be a little arrogant. Added to his oddly rough life, such behavior was born. Please don't punish him too severely, Princess."

His random words made Chu Yu feel like her head was stuck in fog. This was the first time she met that Huan Yuan, and as for his background and temperament, she had no idea whatsoever, while Rong Zhi's mediating words were spoken from an all-knowing point of view. Due to the difference in knowledge, their understandings couldn't match either.

Naturally, Chu Yu wouldn't inquire about more details or exactly what was going on. Going off of Rong Zhi's pleading mercy for Huan Yuan, she smiled faintly and replied, "Okay, I won't look into this matter any further. Count it as a favor towards you, but do not let me find out any more of this sort."

She also formed some probable guesses in her heart. Version one, Huan Yuan was a handsome man from a good family, but was seen by the princess while walking on the streets. She suddenly fell in love with his looks and kidnapped him back to the palace. This handsome boy was smart, talented, knowledgeable, and with a promising future; but after being liked by the princess, all of his bright future was ruined on the princess's bed.

Version two: Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan were a pair of model cut sleeves, but too bad they were both born with good looks, therefore forcefully broken up by

the Princess of Shanyin, and both became hers. His lover was snatched and he still had to serve his rival in love, no wonder he hated her.

No matter which version it was, of course Huan Yuan deeply hated the Princess of Shanyin. But there was nothing he could do, so he distracted himself by discussing literature and poetry with others. Or he was secretly meeting his old lover? And he would try to avoid her banquets at all costs, and it'd best if he could pretend to be sick for every single day of the year.

But only later did she learn, that although her guesses about Huan Yuan weren't all correct, they were already very close.

1. Cut sleeve: gay in ancient China. This novel was written in 2008 so yeah... I'm sure the original author didn't mean to be homophobic or anything just in case anyone feels that way...↩

Chapter 12: Plaything's Game

After watching Chu Yu leave, Rong Zhi sighed, and turned to head towards the pavilion. He pushed the door open and saw Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan seated behind the table side by side, but when he walked close, he saw that the bamboo scroll on the table was upside down.

Seeing Rong Zhi return, Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan both stood up and bowed: "Thank you so much, master Rong, for warning us two." As a matter of fact, although Chu Yu's first guess had some errors, it was close to the truth. Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan, living at this palace, were discussing how to topple the princess's position and regain their freedom.

Rong Zhi's residence was solitary and remote, and plus because he liked quietness, the Princess of Shanyin removed all guards nearby, and even ordered that no one disturb him for no good reasons. Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan were both scholars; originally, they came to Rong Zhi's place just to borrow and read literature and scrolls, but after some time, they slowly perceived the resentment and depression in the other's heart. The two had same feelings and same hopes, so they got along well. After that, when they came here, they conspired to rebel.

Although they were good-looking, because they weren't willing to fawn over the princess, plus Huan Yuan's special background, they were very unfree in the palace. Not to mention going out the palace, even just somewhere within it, they were required to report beforehand. So Rong Zhi's residence was actually the safest place for them.

In the beginning, the two didn't tell Rong Zhi about their plan. Any opinions they exchanged were only spare words and broken sentences, even using motions and implied meanings. But later Jiang Yan realized that Rong Zhi had already found out about their secret planning, so worried that Rong Zhi would tell on them to the princess, they decided to tell him everything, and invited him to join their revolting plan.

At that time, Rong Zhi had on an indifferent expression, only saying, "Whatever you are doing, has nothing to do with me. I will neither tell on you to

the princess, nor will I help you. No matter if you succeed or fail, bear the results yourselves. And look out for yourselves.”

After that, every time the two conferred, Rong Zhi will voluntarily leave and read in the woods, indicating that he didn't want to participate in their business, but let them work it out themselves. But he also set up a mechanism under the bluestone in the woods, so that once someone comes, in the time he needed to get up, he could unnoticeably send out a warning to them.

Huan Yuan thought, that by doing these, Rong Zhi had already proved his deviation.

Rong Zhi said in a casual tone “I have already told you a few days ago, the princess seems a bit different. Today she didn't see you at the banquet, and she actually found over here. I don't know what she is planning. This is what I've said before, and I still say this now.”

After lightly giving some instructions, Rong Zhi turned to leave. But Huan Yuan strided up to block his path, and said sincerely, “Master Rong, please stay. Huan Yuan has something to talk over with you.”

Rong Zhi stopped his steps. His gaze was sharp: “Please speak.”

Huan Yuan hesitated for a second, then made up his mind and said, “Brother Jiang and I have been planning in secret, and master has been concealing us and didn't report; this kindness Huan Yuan will forever remember in his heart..... But master, have you ever thought, that even though master never participated, one day, whether we succeed or fail, perhaps master can not be clear of all responsibility.” After saying this, a smile appeared at the corner of Huan Yuan's lips, “Master is very favored by the princess, but letting us revolt and even secretly providing help and warning for us, I'm afraid the princess wouldn't allow.”

Even though by doing so, it is kind of returning a favor with avengement, to win over Rong Zhi's support, Huan Yuan could only suppress the guilt in his heart for now. Rong Zhi was extremely powerful in the inner court of the princess's palace and his position was very honorable. Whether big or small affairs, as long as he wished to, he could all interfere at will. Not exaggerating, he could almost cover the sky with one hand. If he helped them, their doings would be so much

more convenient.

When Huan Yuan said these words, he was already prepared to bear Rong Zhi's anger. But after waiting for a moment, all he saw was Rong Zhi's very casual smile.

His expression was soft and aloof, but after this smile, it showed slight sharpness: "You are threatening me?" His tone was low and gentle, but there was a vague sternness and power. Making Huan Yuan shudder.

Forcefully confining the rising fear in his chest, Huan Yuan said submissively, "Your servant is only making such a suggestion under desperation. Master Rong, please don't be offended."

Rong Zhi loosened his expression and smiled faintly, "My position on this matter will stay the same. I tell you the truth, Huan Yuan, the reason why I don't report you and Jiang Yan's plot to the princess, is because I don't think you will be able to waver the princess any bit. When your scheme fails, you are welcome to push all responsibility onto me. Then you will see, that I won't be blamed for this at all." He seemed smiling and stern at the same time; his expression was loose and light, but his voice had a hidden nobleness in it, "I know but I don't tell, is only because I'm too lazy to do that, not because I want to shield you. Please do not think too much of it."

His series of remarks both struck and destroyed, hurting people without speaking profanity but was extremely cynical. They made Huan Yuan speechless; his white face blushed with anger, but it simply couldn't break out. He could only swallow the depression into his chest.

Gritting his teeth, Huan Yuan flung his sleeves, and spit: "Brother Jiang, let's go."

The two figures went through the bamboos and buttonwoods one after the other, leaving Snow Shower Garden. Neither of them noticed, that on the cornice of the top floor of the pavilion, two gazes were looking at them the whole time.

All the way until Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan's shadows disappeared into the woods, did Chu Yu withdraw her gaze. She looked at the ground seven to eight meters below her, and smiled softly, "Okay, they left. Yue Jiefei, take me down."

A while ago she had made up a fake scene of leaving, but immediately returned, making Yue Jiefei take her back, and then overhearing the conversation between Huan Yuan and Rong Zhi. This was the truth that she really wanted to know. Just now, to avoid clashing right into Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan, Yue Jiefei brought her up here with a jump, like a short moment of riding on the clouds. Chu Yu finally experienced herself that QingGong¹ really existed in the world. Now, she was going to “fly” again.

Yue Jiefei held Chu Yu’s waist, and lightly brought her down. She didn’t even see what he did, but like a huge bird, they dropped down softly from the cornice and tuned mid-air, changing their route, entering the bamboo grove. After landing on the ground, Yue Jiefei immediately let go of Chu Yu; his movements were very disciplined and courteous, but Chu Yu guessed that he was afraid that the beast in her would suddenly come out and tarnish him, therefore he was so careful.

Although she was misunderstood so frequently, Chu Yu didn’t intend to explain. Time will tell; after some time, others will notice the change in the “princess”.

After Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan left, Rong Zhi picked up the books and scrolls the two had put down. But he then heard the slight sound of garments slicing through the air. Frowning, he hurried to the window, and saw Yue Jiefei and Chu Yu landing in the bamboo grove.

Chu Yu balanced herself, then turned and met Rong Zhi’s gaze. She was neither surprised nor hurried, but very naturally shot him a beaming smile, then turned and walked out the garden.

Rong Zhi shook his head softly, muttering in his heart that Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan didn’t know, but they have failed already. So much painstaking planning was just the small struggling game of a plaything in the princess’s eyes. Only that Chu Yu’s manner these past few days were so out of his expectation, making him a little confused.

..... But just a little, nothing more.

1. QingGong: (just in case you don’t remember this from ch.6) 轻功, a skill which allows one to jump really far/high, almost like flying. Supposedly part of the ancient Chinese

Kung Fu, but more likely made up... We don't know if it really existed or not.↵

Chapter 13: Young Man Jiang's Talents Have Not Been Used Up

Chu Yu walked out of Snow Shower Garden and headed towards her residence, the East Wing. On the way here she had forced herself to memorize the routes, so now she didn't need anyone to guide her.

Returning to the East Wing, Chu Yu ordered for the file records of every male concubine in the palace to be brought in front of her. After giving out the order, she glanced at Yue Jiefei. He was standing besides her, and seemed to be debating whether or not to say something. Chu Yu laughed, "Ask whatever you want to ask, it's fine."

Yue Jiefei thought for a second, then said, "Princess, what are you going to do with Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan?"

Chu Yu frowned slightly. Right now she didn't have an answer in her mind yet. Basing off what Rong Zhi had said, he seemed very confident in the original Princess of Shanyin, believing that Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan could do nothing to her. The problem was, she wasn't the real princess; she was now at a loss in such a situation.

Pausing and thinking, Chu Yu pursed her lips and chuckled, "When a scholar plans a revolt, it's never done within three years. There's no need to bother with them, let's look at the situation clearly first."

The files were sent over quickly. The information of the male concubines were recorded on silk scrolls, rolled up and wrapped in silk sacks. The names of the male concubines were written on the light cyan colored silk; Chu Yu could open any one of them and see all information on the person.

Although they were written in ancient Chinese and traditional characters, Chu Yu's father studied ancient literature, so she had some contact with this type of writing. Not that she was any expert in it, but to understand these narrative words wasn't too hard.

Chu Yu first opened the sack with Jiang Yan's name on it. The scroll stated that

Jiang Yan lost his father at a young age, was very talented, and even held small office. But later he was framed of bribery and cast into prison, where he wrote to petition his innocence. For some reason, his petition passed through multiple people and landed in the hands of the Princess of Shanyin. Reading the eloquent petition that was neither humble nor arrogant, the Princess of Shanyin was moved and got him out of prison.

Poor Jiang Yan! He just left prison, but immediately entered a more sumptuous jail. In the Princess of Shanyin's harem, he couldn't express his aspirations; he couldn't use his talents.

Jiang Yan, Jiang Yan..... Chu Yu frowned, repeating this name again and again. Why did it feel familiar? After thinking about it for a long time, Chu Yu abruptly slapped the table, "I remember now, Jiang lang cai jin¹!"

Jiang lang cai jin was an idiom, used to describe a very talented person losing his talents. The origin of this idiom was this young man Jiang, this Jiang Yan at the princess's palace! It's said that this person was extremely gifted and smart when he was young, but after reaching middle-age, his writing and poetry slowly lost its brilliance. Therefor this allusion, known as "Jiang lang cai jin".

Although Jiang Yan's poetry wasn't popular enough for anyone to be able to recite a few lines, but his "the most deeply depressing thing, is no other than parting" was very famous. Even the Deeply Depressing Press invented by Yang Guo from the wuxia novel Condor Heroes² originated from this line.

Finally recalling the name of Jiang lang, Chu Yu couldn't help but feel a preposterous sense of dislocation. This scholar that has left his name in history, that has become an illusion, was now at the Princess of Shanyin's..... To be exact, he was now at *her* harem. But in the books she read in her before life, Jiang Yan being forced to become a male concubine was never mentioned. Maybe this was just someone with the same name.

The the time periods they were in were so close together; both lost their fathers at a young age and lived in poverty; with their backgrounds and situations so similar, it was hard to say they were two different people. As for the records..... History was recorded by man, and could be distorted by man. If one held power, he can tamper with history however he wanted.....

Reading Jiang Yan's information, Chu Yu thought for a long time but still couldn't be sure. Anyway, no matter if this Jiang Yan was the one in history, she had made up her mind to release him from the princess' palace, and let him swim freely in the oceans and fly unrestrained in the skies.

Chu Yu then read some others' information and discovered that the male concubines in her harem came from all kinds of backgrounds, enough to write a "History of a Hundred Grudges". According to each person's condition, Chu Yu classified them in her heart and made some initial plans as to what to do with them. At last she came to Huan Yuan's scroll. The pattern on the edge of the sack was exceptionally delicate; Chu Yu attempted to open the sack, but realized that this one was different from the others. It was sealed.

Was there a secret?

Chu Yu's interest was suddenly hooked up.

Chu Yu fished out a bob³ from her sleeve—she didn't want to bother with it so she didn't put it up in a bun, instead using a silk ribbon to tie it up. But she kept a silver bob in her sleeve; Chu Yu herself didn't know why she did that, for supposedly she didn't need a weapon for self-defense; but still, it felt safer to keep something sharp close by—she started to use the end of the bob to tease the linen thread that sutured the sack. After a while, Huan Yuan's information was exposed before Chu Yu for her to see.

When she unfolded the scroll, Chu Yu still had an easy smile on her face. But when she read the first few lines written on the scroll in red ink, her smile froze on her face.

This was!

Huan Yuan?

So it was like this.....

Unexpectedly.....

Sure enough.....

Well then.....

She didn't know how long had passed, but when she placed down the scroll,

she suddenly felt a little headache.

Jiang Yan was very easy to deal with. She could randomly write a letter and push him to some royalty or noble or government official. But this Huan Yuan was tricky stuff.

Chu Yu rubbed her knitted brows. After a moment, she was spirited again: wasn't it just a few toyboys? If the Princess of Shanyin could manage them, she could manage them.

Chu Yu rolled the silk scroll up again, then cast a glance at Yue Jiefei, and said in a heavy voice: "Yue Jiefei, remember, everything you saw in this room today, do not tell anyone." Although she wasn't the true princess, she could act out an authoritative manner. Yue Jiefei felt cold in his heart, and at once claimed he didn't dare.

Chu Yu pulled herself together. After a slight moment of hesitation, she reached for the last scroll: Rong Zhi.

Even Huan Yuan had such a background, then what about Rong Zhi, who enjoyed an extremely special position in the palace? Who could he be, and for what reason and through what way did he come to the princess' palace? Why, when he disagreed with Huan Yuan, would he defend the Princess of Shanyin so strongly? And why did the Princess of Shanyin favor him so greatly?

As her fingertips touched the soft silk, Rong Zhi's ebony and profound irises surfaced in Chu Yu's mind. Calm and clear, with a hint of smile in them. Commanding herself not to think more, Chu Yu quickly drew the scroll out of the sack. But when she spread it out, she was stunned.

She had thought that after reading Huan Yuan's information, she wouldn't be so surprised. But Rong Zhi made her surprised again. Because, this piece of silk, was completely clean. There was nothing on it.

No name, no birthplace, no age, no description. Nothing, not even a single word.

This blankness turned into a dense and invisible net, gathering all her worries and suspicions together, bringing them to her mind.

What happened? Did she forget record it? Or..... was there nothing?

Chu Yu closed the scroll, her heart filled with questions. She ordered people to take away all the files and return them to their places. Her investigation was half success and half failure; she learned many things through these written recordings, but at the same time, she also had more questions.

1. Jiang lang cai jin: 江郎才尽, literal meaning the talents of a young man named Jiang were used up. “Lang” means “young man”.↵
2. Condor Heroes: 神雕侠侣, written by Jin Yong, one of the most famous wuxia novels ever written. Protagonist is Yang Guo; in the story he self-invented a set of palm techniques known as Deeply Depressing Press ← k i admit we played with the alliteration here :^) but it kinda is what it meant it’s one of those very hard to translate words and ik this is really weird but it sounds really really cool in Chinese...↵
3. Bob: 发簪, a type of hair accessory used in ancient China. Looks like a stick and can hold one’s hair in place.↵

Chapter 14: Killing Three Birds With One Stone

Chu Yu sat by the lantern, holding a silver bob with a butterfly decoration in her hands. She examined it closely: the tip of the bob was very sharp, sharp enough to pierce one's heart.

From the first day she arrived in this time period, she had carved a mark on the edge of her bed every day with this silver bob. Now, there were already ten marks.

After staring at it for a long time, Chu Yu slowly turned her wrist, sending the tip of the bob into the flames in the lantern. Pulling it out after a while, she looked at it closely again, then dipped the tip into water, and wiped it dry.

She repeated this process several times.

The sharp tip of the bob glinted with cold light. Hesitating, Chu Yu held the bob in her left hand and aimed it at her right hand for a couple of minutes, then finally picked an angle, and drew it down swiftly.

The sharp silver point cut the tender flesh of her palm; bright red blood quickly flowed out from cut, which was a little longer than one inch. Chu Yu pressed on her wound with a silk handkerchief and shouted, "Come! I, the Princess, have been injured!"

Of course, what happened next were maids hurrying over, then the summoning of the doctor on the palace. Chu Yu let him fiddle with her wounded hand freely. Although she had a painful expression on, there was a hint of smile in her eyes.

Even though the problem with her accent and pronunciation has been miraculously solved with the changing of her body, Chu Yu had tried secretly and realized that her handwriting problem had not been resolved. She had practiced calligraphy when she was a kid in her before life, but that had been a long time ago, and now her handwriting was despicable. If she came upon any situation where she needed to write, it would probably be unavoidable for her to slip.

Handwriting was different from her normal behavior; she could easily deny the

change in her behavior and never admit to it, but her handwriting would be left on paper, a true and irrefutable evidence.

Chu Yu understood that once she started managing affairs, it would be unavoidable to write. Decisive and keen, before anyone had the chance to suspect her, she hurt her right hand herself, absolving a huge risk with a tiny cost. With that, she could perfectly and justifiably let others write for her.

She was still very careful with her plan. She cleansed the tip of the bob before cutting herself, to prevent infection from the wound. She also drew the bob along the lines on her palm, so although it would seem like a serious wound, it would heal very quickly, and there wouldn't be much of a scar left.

Originally, Chu Yu disliked things like self-mutilation, and could have pretended to seek pleasure for a longer time, imitating the Princess of Shanyin's handwriting through the process. But after learning about the thing with Huan Yuan, she realized that she couldn't delay. After all, she wasn't the real Princess of Shanyin, and she didn't even know who else besides Jiang Yan participated in Huan Yuan's plan. Probably some other male concubines in her palace. Although she told Yue Jiefei with a smile that a scholar's revolt is never done within three years, if many united together, she still couldn't just dismiss it lightly.

Since she couldn't control the big situation with confidence, she needed to resolutely take action.

After her wound was bandaged, Chu Yu summoned Rong Zhi.

Looking at the layers of white gauze wrapped around her hand, Chu Yu sent everyone else away, only leaving Rong Zhi with her in the room. She went straight to the point: "I intend to send Jiang Yan out of the Princess' Palace. What do you think?" Rong Zhi really wasn't the best choice, but since Chu Yu had heard his words, which seemed to be defending the Princess of Shanyin, she reckoned that Rong Zhi was on her side.

Even though she still felt uneasy, with logical thinking, she decided that Rong Zhi could be a useful helper for now.

Rong Zhi didn't do any superficial courtesies either, and asked directly, "How?"

"Recommend him, and give him a position." Chu Yu had the answer in mind

long ago.

Rong Zhi's eyes flashed: "Only Jiang Yan?"

"No." Chu Yu let out a playing smile. She read out five or six names; but Huan Yuan was not included.

Rong Zhi tilted his head in thought. After a short while, he smiled, "Killing three birds with one stone. Since the Princess had already made the best decision, why still ask my opinion?"

The two gazed at each other, both seeing the subtle smile in the other's eyes. Suddenly, there was a wonderful knowing feeling between them.

Chu Yu's idea was basically separation. Since Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan were the masterminds behind the plan, she was going to separate the two. She would release Jiang Yan to freedom; doing this would not only decrease Jiang Yan's hostility towards her, but would also cut off the contact between him and Huan Yuan.

Jiang Yan's leaving would be a tremendous blow to Huan Yuan. It would eliminate half of his power. In addition, by sending some other possibly participating male concubines away, all his helpers and coordinators would be gone. There would be no way he could continue his plan.

The third benefit was, that not only did Jiang Yan gain his freedom, he even marched towards a glorious career with Chu Yu's recommendation. This was undoubtedly hinting at the other male concubines in the palace, that they also had the hope to become so. As a result, there would be even less people helping Huan Yuan. With a foreseeable future, who would gamble with him?

They would only fawn on her more; some might even not hesitate to betray Huan Yuan for their liberty.

This move would kill three birds with one stone, very smart and cunning. This was Chu Yu's well thought out idea, but with just some disclosure, Rong Zhi understood all of it. His keenness and understanding were remarkable.

Chu Yu couldn't help but praising him in her heart, but a strong caution and alertness also rose in her heart: what she had been thinking about for so long, Rong Zhi understood thoroughly with just a slight mention. This youth was too

smart, smart enough to make her afraid.

If he did the same as Huan Yuan, it would be impossible for her contend with it so easily.

Forcefully suppressing this warning feeling, Chu Yu thought for a moment, then asked: "I have summoned you to ask you, who do you think I should recommend Jiang Yan to? Objectively speaking, he is a talented person."

Hearing this, Rong Zhi looked at Chu Yu with surprise, "The Princess is really going to recommend this person?"

Chu Yu was even more surprised than him. "Of course. Will I, the Princess, go back on my words?"

Rong Zhi stared fixedly at Chu Yu, as if wanting to see clearly if she was sincere or not. After a moment, he laughed: "The Princess is really different from before. If it were the original princess, even if she used this strategy to estrange the group on the surface, she would still definitely get rid of Jiang Yan in secret, not to mention recommending him to an official position."

Chu Yu's heart beat crazily. But she was calm on the outside: "Me changing to being like this, is it good or not good?" Chu Yu had not expected that she would expose such a big loophole; but then she thought that Rong Zhi didn't have any evidence, so she relaxed slightly. Even if she knew the original style of the Princess of Shanyin, she still wouldn't be willing to kill people just to not show a flaw.

Rong Zhi smiled, "Hard to tell if good or not good. Before, the Princess is very meticulous and never leaves any chances for anyone, decisive and never merciful, but a little short of generosity. Today, the Princess seems to be more soft-hearted, but so much different in manner. Jiang Yan attempted to revolt, but the Princess not only didn't see it as a challenge to authority, but even gave him a future. Although the Princess has connived him, this magnanimity, Rong Zhi can't help but admire."

Chu Yu couldn't help her face growing hot. Although she couldn't say she had a favorable impression of Rong Zhi, and she's even on guard with him, being gazed so genuinely by such a beautiful youth and being said to be admired, Chu Yu's heart still skipped a few beats.

Chapter 15: An Overt Plot Between Fingertips

Chu Yu's personality was decisive and firm, so her slightly affected emotions calmed down in only a moment. Trying hard to not think about what Rong Zhi just said, she replied, "It's just that I see his rare talents, and can not bear to see a pearl to be covered in dust."

If her guesses were correct, this Jiang Yan should be the Jiang Yan in history that wrote "the most deeply depressing thing, is no other than parting". Even though the earth would still rotate without him, it would still be such a pity.

Rong Zhi smiled gently. Although his expression was a little indifferent, he didn't say anything to refute.

Under Chu Yu's guidance and Rong Zhi's cooperation, arrangements for the six male concubines leaving the Princess' Palace were made very soon. According to their personal circumstances, they were given different futures. Among them, Jiang Yan, who was a partial leader of the revolt, was put some distance from the other five; he was alienated.

Due to Chu Yu's hand being injured, Rong Zhi helped write the recommendation letters and stamped them.

She didn't know if it was her misconception or not, but Chu Yu felt that Rong Zhi's gaze kept intentionally or unintentionally sweep over her right hand wrapped in white gauze.

Chu Yu once again held a gathering in the apricot woods; with only a two-day interval between, many thought that after a few days of quieting down, the princess had returned to her drunk and dreamy manner.

But Jiang Yan had an ominous feeling rising in his heart.

Due to Rong Zhi's warning last time, Huan Yuan also came. He hadn't seen the princess for many days, so he didn't know what changed about the princess; he could only come see with his own eyes. Seeing is believing.

At this banquet, neither Liu Se nor Mo Xiang got the opportunity to sit beside Chu Yu. The two could only look at Chu Yu, who was at the head of the banquet, but dared not to come up. For beside Chu Yu, sat Rong Zhi.

Chu Yu's right hand couldn't function properly, so the tiresome little things such as pouring wine were done by Rong Zhi. With Rong Zhi sitting by her, compared to Liu Se and Mo Xiang, another benefit was that he wouldn't look for every chance to press closely to her or ogle, trying to seduce her. He would only understand her intention and give a helping hand at proper times. This made Chu Yu save many of her worries.

After a few drinks, Chu Yu hinted with some glances for Rong Zhi to start. Smiling faintly, he pulled out six letters sealed with wax: "Jiang Yan, you come up."

Jiang Yan's heart sank. Before he came here, his instinct already told him that things weren't good. Seeing Rong Zhi sitting beside Chu Yu, he couldn't help thinking that maybe Rong Zhi felt unresigned to be threatened by Huan Yuan, so he preemptively told the princess about their conspiracy?

His steps feeling as heavy as lead, Jiang Yan walked slowly towards Chu Yu. He was just a scholar, so it was only wishful thinking to forcefully escape from here, not to mention becoming a wanted criminal after escaping.

No matter what was going to happen, all he could do was to calmly accept it, and calmly receive it.

Although it was only a distance of thirty to forty feet, Jiang Yan felt like he had walked his whole life. Coming before Chu Yu, he slowly knelt down, already prepared to die. There was no fervency or indignation in his heart, only emptiness; terrifying emptiness.

At this critical time, Jiang Yan suddenly regretted participating in Huan Yuan's scheme. Sensing this change in his heart, Jiang Yan couldn't help but feel a little ashamed. But to face death with fervency, wasn't something so easy to achieve.

All of Jiang Yan's psychological activity reflected only to dejectedness on his face. Seeing his expression, Chu Yu could already guess some of his thoughts. She carefully observed Jiang Yan's appearance: his handsome and intellectual countenance, his thick black brows that added a heroic spirit, his narrow and

long eyes, and his tightly pursed lips that made him seem a little depressed. Chu Yu looked intently; after all, he was going to be released very soon, and she probably wouldn't ever get a chance to see this gifted scholar again.

With this rare chance of meeting a historical figure, Chu Yu looked for a little bit too long. Only when Rong Zhi gently tug on her sleeve under the long table, did Chu Yu realize it was time to get to business. She smiled softly, and took an envelope from Rong Zhi's hand with her left hand. Handing it to Jiang Yan, her expression was gentle: "Jiang Yan, it's been some time since you came to my place. I've decided to let you leave the palace. Here's a recommendation letter; if you take it and go see the King of Jianping, Liu Jingsu, he will use you bring you up to prominence."

Once second ago he thought he was cast to hell. But the next second, when he opened his eyes, he saw himself in heaven.

Jiang Yan listened to the sound of every word Chu Yu spoke. He understood every single word, but when put together, its meaning was so incredible and so hard to believe in. He was so shocked that even his palms started trembling.

What he dreamed for for so long, freedom and future; both, were offered in front of him.

At his fingertips.

Accompanying realization was ecstasy; enthusiasm flashed across Jiang Yan's long and narrow eyes. He extended his hands forward, about to accept the envelope in Chu Yu's hand; he could leave this cage, he could display his talents to his heart's content.....

Jiang Yan's mind was blank. He took a deep breath, and was just about to accept that letter solemnly, when a soft coughing sounded from behind him. That sound was deeply familiar to him. He had once discussed poetry and literature with him, he had once plotted and conspired with him..... As if a thunderbolt suddenly struck his heart, Jiang Yan's face went pale. Looking at the Chu Yu smiling before him, he suddenly understood the purpose of this letter.

Estrangement.

He didn't move. Chu Yu didn't move either, just holding out the envelope with

a smile on her face, maintaining the posture of handing it to him.

She smiled leisurely: are you going to accept it or not?

This was no secret plot, this was an on-the-table upright overt plot. So calmly placed in the light for him to see, but Jiang Yan just couldn't decline it.

What Chu Yu now held in her hand, was what he had been dreaming for. If only he accepted it, he wouldn't need to risk anything. He could leave safely, and head safely towards his future..... But the precondition for all this was—

To betray Huan Yuan.

He knew a little bit about Huan Yuan's identity. Normally, there was no way for Huan Yuan to leave this cage for the entirety of his life. Because of this, Huan Yuan took the risk and considered revolting. If Jiang Yan left now, it would be giving Huan Yuan a bloody stab at his most unsuspecting area.

Even if no one else knew, Jiang Yan himself understood the knowingness, empathy, and affection between him and Huan Yuan. Although they were putting on a show before the princess the other day, the show was fake, but the affection was real. If not for two years of deep relationship, how could they put on such a realistic show?

Seeing Jiang Yan waver, Chu Yu added the treat: "You have always had talent. The King of Jianping will definitely like you very much. I have already sent people to bring him the poetry you have composed in the past, so if you go, you will be greatly recognized by him." As she said this, Chu Yu felt amused; she felt as if she was a witch tempting and alluring people with a sweet-smelling but poisonous apple, just that this poisonous apple would only do Jiang Yan benefits and no harm. What was harmed, was another person's interest.

She wasn't really worried that Jiang Yan would reject in the end.

One side was a comfortable career and foreseeable freedom, one side was a revolt that could already be counted as a failure; one side was unlimited glory, one side was roughness and ruggedness; one side was life clothed in silk robes, one side was death in a pool of blood.

The gains and losses to one's interest are forever at the center of conflicts.

Humans instinctively avoid harm and seek profit.

Remembering his father that died at a young age, remembering his mother's hopes and expectations for him, with a face as pale as a sheet of paper and trembling fingers, Jiang Yan accepted the recommendation letter that felt heavier than the sky from Chu Yu's hand. The weight crushed on him, that he almost couldn't breathe.

Rong Zhi shook his head ever so slightly, sighing softly.

Chu Yu smiled with satisfaction.

Chapter 16: The Strongest is the Easiest to Break

Carrying the heavy letter in his sleeve, Jiang Yan walked back to his seat with shaky steps. He didn't dare to even take a glance at Huan Yuan, for he was scared to see the blame, resentment, and accusation on his face; any of these emotions would hurt him.

After Jiang Yan were the other five. Chu Yu handed the letters to each of them personally, and very warmly gave them appropriate encouragements, as if she were a generous person that just rose in position. Those who didn't receive recommendations also saw hope in this; some even seemed eager.

But one of the people at the banquet, although quaint and elegant, had a mournfully pale face, and his eyes were as cold and distant as a ghost's.

This person was Huan Yuan.

He was surrounded by a splendid spring scene, but Huan Yuan felt he was in midwinter; all the white apricot flowers turned into ice and snow in his eyes.

Originally, he had thought that even if the princess found out about his plan and he failed, the most he could receive was death. He didn't expect that Chu Yu would take such an action: she didn't want him to die; she wanted him to be deserted, abandoned, and betrayed by everyone.

He didn't care about failing, but he cared about Jiang Yan.

Until now, he still remembered, that in the old days in Rong Zhi's pavilion, he and Jiang Yan had been in the same room for a period of time, but neither talked to the other. Until one day, when the two were looking for books, they happened to both reach for the same one. Looking to the other person, they couldn't help opening their mouths:

"Sir....."

"Brother....."

Broken into pieces falling to the ground..... Everything was gone forever.

Done with the arrangements for the six people, Chu Yu felt much more relaxed. She raised her cup, and subconsciously glanced towards Huan Yuan's direction, wanting to see his expression. When her gaze landed on his face, Chu Yu was a little shocked. Although she came up with the whole plan, she didn't expect that Jiang Yan's betrayal would be such a hard blow to Huan Yuan.

Even though she felt a little sorry in her heart, if given another chance, Chu Yu still wouldn't change her decision. After all, she had to do this. She wasn't the true Princess of Shanyin, and she couldn't control the whole situation or leisurely fix everything easily, so she could only seek another path and separate them.

When the banquet dispersed, Chu Yu specifically let Jiang Yan stay. She toasted him three farewell cups, and smiled: "The King of Jianping has always liked literature and books. He is also a young man, so at his place, you would definitely be like a fish in water. Here I wish you the best luck and a life of success."

At this time, everyone had already left. Only Jiang Yan, Rong Zhi, and Chu Yu's personal guard Yue Jiefei were left beside her.

Hearing Chu Yu's words, a thousand feelings surged in Jiang Yan's heart. Now, he didn't even know if he hated Chu Yu or was grateful to her. But Chu Yu had given him kindness and help was the indisputable truth.

Abruptly swallowing down a cup of wine, Jiang Yan's cheeks started blushing. He lowered his head and begged, "Princess, after I leave, please do not punish Huan Yuan. This person has stunning talents, which even I am far from matching. If..... It would truly be such a pity." He guessed that Chu Yu probably already knew about their conspiracy, or she would not have used such means to separate them. With a guilty heart to Huan Yuan, Jiang Yan came to beg mercy for him from Chu Yu.

Chu Yu smiled, "Don't worry about this. If I really wanted to punish you two, there would be no need for going through all this trouble. You probably also realized, that I purposefully let you make a choice in front of a crowd, forcing you to forsake Huan Yuan. Will you blame me for doing this?"

Jiang Yan's expression was perplexed: "I don't know."

Chu Yu lifted up her cup and sipped some wine. The wine of this time contained little alcohol, plus it was mild fruit wine, so she completely drank it like

drinking juice: “You’re very honest. If you immediately say you won’t blame me, that would be a plain-out lie. I have my reasons for doing this. Do you still remember the time when you were framed and cast into prison? Although that person was at fault, have you reflected on yourself?”

Instantly, Jiang Yan became a little unhappy, “I didn’t do anything wrong, why do I need to reflect on myself?”

Chu Yu sighed: “Why did that person frame you, out of all possible people? And all your former colleagues, none of them spoke up for you. Wasn’t it because you failed epically on the social level?”

Seeing Jiang Yan pause, Chu Yu continued, “There is a saying, called the strongest is the easiest to break; if too hard and rigid, something would be easy to break. I absolutely have no intention to make you mix with the corrupt officials, but at the same time of preserving your virtuous and noble self, you also need to learn to socialize and establish relationships. Without a few friends, it would be hard for you to have a smooth and successful career.” She smiled comfortingly, “I am not trying to persuade you anything, only hoping that at some times, you might recall my words. Sometimes, submission and compromise aren’t disgraceful; overly caring about unnecessary things would instead harm you.”

Jiang Yan gazed fixedly at Chu Yu for a long time, then solemnly raised his cup: “Thank you, Princess, for your teachings.” Although he didn’t agree with Chu Yu’s words, he could feel that Chu Yu was sincerely trying to help him.

Chu Yu smiled, and also raised her cup, but discovered that her cup was empty. She let Rong Zhi pour her some more wine, but there was not a trickle left in the flagon either, so she simply set her cup down, “I did this today because I wanted to grind your elan a bit, so that if you once again meet hardships after today, you will encounter less setbacks. Your talent is stunning, and there’s a good prospect for a bright future for you. The better days are in the future; the past can all be viewed as smoke and dust.” By saying this, although Chu Yu had started with the intention of buying support for herself, she also couldn’t bear to see this gifted scholar fail due to his overly unyielding personality. But as she talked on, she became more and more earnest and sincere.

Smoke and dust?

Jiang Yan watched the apricot flowers falling to the ground in the distance. Could he really, treat everything that had happened here, as the smoke and dust in the past?

After those words, all that was to be said were already spoken. Chu Yu slowly stood up, then as if suddenly remembered something, tilted her head to look at Jiang Yan, and spoke softly, "The most deeply depressing thing, is no other than parting."

Yue Jiefei had no knowledge and understanding for poetry or literature, but when Rong Zhi and Jiang Yan heard Chu Yu's words, they couldn't help being shocked, and wonder why Chu Yu would suddenly say so. But after they each thought about it in their hearts, both were moved.

The most deeply depressing thing, is no other than parting. This sentence seems plain and simple, but really spelled out all the feelings of farewell. Some things, the first person who said it would be a genius, but the second would only be considered a copycat. No one had ever described separation like this before; so when the two heard this, they both felt refreshed. They had no idea that Chu Yu was just reciting from her textbook.

Jiang Yan himself was very skilled at writing and composing poems, and his understanding of poetry was also pretty good. As he repeated this sentence in his heart again and again, his expression became more and more amazed. This sentence fit his feelings and thoughts so well! He didn't know why, but for some reason he felt an indescribable intimacy with this sentence. As if something was sprouting in his chest, but missing something.

But he was also sure, that he had never read or heard this sentence before.

When Chu Yu said this sentence, she had in mind the idea of probing Jiang Yan, to determine if he was or was not the one in history. After she said it and saw the two's expression, she suddenly realized that she had neglected a detail. Damn it.

Even if this Jiang Yan was that Jiang Yan, with his current age and experiences, there was no way he could think of this sentence. To put it simply, she stole a sentence that Jiang Yan was going to write out sometime in the future.

Crap crap crap, she really didn't do it on purpose.

Chu Yu shrugged.

But now that things were already like this, and now that she had already stole Jiang Yan's work, she couldn't say, oh, this is the poetry you would write in the future, I just said it out in advance now to return it to you. So she could only pretend to be calm and smile, letting Jiang Yan think about however he wanted to.

Chapter 17: A Real Snob

After drinking the farewell cup, Chu Yu let a servant help Jiang Yan pack and prepare to leave. She herself stayed in the apricot woods and leaned on an apricot tree, her uninjured hand playing around with the empty cup.

“What do you think about my handling of the situation?” She gazed at the edge of the cup, but her words were directed toward Rong Zhi, who was standing beside.

Rong Zhi smiled: “Very clever. I never knew the princess was so eloquent; with a short speech, you easily melted the unhappiness in Jiang Yan’s heart. If there ever is a chance to meet again, he will also remember the princess’ kindness today.”

Chu Yu twitched her lips. To tell the truth, she didn’t want to stay in the Princess’ Palace and think of ways to deal with all the male concubines’ matters, but since she inherited the Princess of Shanyin’s body, it was her duty to inherit her everything else too. Dealing with these matters was her responsibility.

Not long later, a good-looking youth walked back. He stood by the edge of the apricot woods, hesitating whether to approach Chu Yu or not. In the end, it was Chu Yu noticing him and calling him over to talk.

This youth was one of the male concubines too. Chu Yu remembered that his surname was Shen but she couldn’t recall his name. The youth walked over, his expression a little conflicted. Finally, he came up with the determination to kneel down and say, “Princess, Shen Guangzuo has very important information to report to you.”

Chu Yu’s hands tightened: here it comes.

Rong Zhi smiled lightly, “Well, he sure is playing the cards fast.”

Shen Guangzuo came clean up with everything he knew about Huan Yuan’s plan. So Huan Yuan had bribed people at the Princess’ Palace, and was now able to communicate with some prestigious officials that currently have great power in their hands.

Hearing this, Chu Yu couldn't help but be amazed, amazed at Huan Yuan's ingenious method. Really, although his method was basically bribery, bribery needed skill too. Who could be bribed, who couldn't be bribed, how much to pay, the relay of information from the inner court to the outer court, confidential concealment, check and balance between the bribed and the briber... Because there were so many aspects that needed to be considered, plus Huan Yuan himself was restricted, the process was carried out relatively slowly, and was cut off by Chu Yu before it could be finished. But the clever and detailed parts of the whole plan was enough to make people awe.

Chu Yu had to say that Huan Yuan was a scholar after all; his methods of planning was still relatively civilized. There was no intention to fight and kill. His plan was basically to use pressure from the outside world to force Chu Yu to release them. The meeting of weapons was only to be used if they absolutely had to.

Afraid that Chu Yu wouldn't believe him, Shen Guangzuo's report was very detailed. Although Chu Yu listened with a smile on her face, she felt uncomfortable in her heart. After all, she had just gave out the recommendation letters a short while ago, and now this youth came up to her to tattle on Huan Yuan; by this she could see how powerful the tempting of one's interest was, and how easy humans could waver.

If this Shen Guangzuo was an official, he would probably be one that would cling to whoever was in power.

But since his doings benefited Chu Yu, she wasn't stupid enough to make any capricious decisions based off of her own feelings. She helped Shen Guangzuo up warmly, and smiled, "After I confirm that what you just said is true, I will reward you greatly. It's been some time since you came to my place; do you want to go out and make yourself a career and future?"

Shen Guangzuo became eager, but he didn't really dare to say it out loud. Chu Yu asked casually, "Are you good at scholarly studies or martial arts?"

Shen Guangzuo's eyes brightened, and replied: "I have trained martial arts since very young....."

Chu Yu interrupted him, "Very good." She tilted her head to Rong Zhi, "Who do

you say I should recommend him to?”

After thinking about it carefully, Rong Zhi answered, “I suggest, to recommend him to the general of Longxiang, Shen Youzhi.” Among the officials in power Shen Guangzuo had said Huan Yuan was contacting, the most notable was Shen Qingzhi, one of the most important officials of the day. Shen Youzhi was Shen Qingzhi’s nephew.

Hearing his words, Shen Guangzuo couldn’t hold in his elation anymore. Even though Chu Yu didn’t know who this General of Longxiang was, judging by Shen Guangzuo’s expression, she could tell that it was a good place to go to.

Dismissing Shen Guangzuo, Chu Yu couldn’t resist to ask Rong Zhi, “This Shen Guangzuo is a snob that jumps sides to whoever is in power quickly, so why did you give him such a favorable treatment?” Although she agreed, but because Shen Guangzuo surrendered to her so quickly, Chu Yu still looked down on this person. Even though Shen Guangzuo jumped to her side, Chu Yu still liked people who stood their values better.

Rong Zhi smiled, “The current situation is turbulent; sending him to Shen Youzhi would be more helpful. I have investigated Shen Guangzuo’s background; he is a distant relative of the Shen family. With this relationship, his promotion would be faster. Do not disdain him for being a snob. Just because he is a snob, can we use him easily and conveniently. If he were someone like Jiang Yan, I would contrarily not be able to use him comfortably.”

What Rong Zhi meant, was that this Shen Guangzuo would still be useful in the future. Chu Yu pondered in her heart and didn’t say more.

Sometimes emotions and logic cannot come together. She understood this principle.

After waiting for some more, and seeing that no one else came to tattle on others, Rong Zhi told Chu Yu: “I’ll go and tell Shen Guangzuo some things he needs to take note of.” Then he left.

Finding Shen Guangzuo, the two conversed for almost a full hour. After that, as Rong Zhi walked out of Shen Guangzuo’s bedroom, he suddenly remembered something, and turned to head towards Distant Dwelling, which was not far away.

Distant Dwelling was Huan Yuan's residence, also an independent dwelling. In the entire West Wing, besides the princess' husband He Ji, only Huan Yuan and Rong Zhi had their own residences. All the other male concubines shared living spaces with others. But different from Rong Zhi's residence's quietness and peacefulness, Huan Yuan's residence was guarded. When the two guards at the door saw Rong Zhi coming, they immediately saluted and made way for him: "Master Rong, please enter."

With a rectangle lacquer tray in front of him, carrying a flagon and two winecups, Huan Yuan knelt in the shadows of a corner, his expression hard to perceive; only his slender brows and eyes could be seen.

When Rong Zhi came close to him, Huan Yuan suddenly jumped up from the ground and grabbed his collar, slamming him onto the wall. Rong Zhi's shoulder blades struck the wall with force. Piercing pain immediately spread to every limb and bone in his body.

Chapter 18: The World is a Furnace

“What do you want to do?” His body almost going stiff from pain, Rong Zhi asked coldly.

Because of the pain, cold sweat rapidly beaded on his forehead, then slid down and dripped to the ground. But his expression was still so at ease, his gaze leisure and carefree, as if his body had nothing to do with him: “Manhandling is not your personality. Huan Yuan, do not lose your bearing.”

Huan Yuan gazed at Rong Zhi emotionlessly for a moment, then slowly let go. He sat back to his original position and picked up the flagon in front of him. Pouring himself some wine, he said, “The princess found out about the plan between me and Jiang Yan. Was it you that tattled on us?” He had prepared this wine for Jiang Yan as a farewell; although Jiang Yan forsook him, he still wanted to see him one last time. But he was stopped by the guards by his door, restricting his movements.

Although his movements weren’t free before, he had never been trapped indoors like this. Obviously, these guards had received special orders.

Rong Zhi chuckled, “You have underestimated the princess too much. The settlement at the banquet was comed up by the princess herself. That day when you and Jiang Yan were conspiring, after the princess pretended to leave, she returned. Even I wasn’t on guard enough. After that, the princess decided to send Jiang Yan out of the palace.” But the guards that held Huan Yuan in were ordered by Rong Zhi. Although Huan Yuan had already failed, he was unwilling to give up. He wanted to use the excuse of bidding farewell to hook up Jiang Yan’s guilt, which would make it convenient for him to carry out future plans. But Rong Zhi did not plan to give him the opportunity.

Huan Yuan fell silent. After a long pause, he said slowly, “Rong Zhi, things are already like this; it doesn’t matter how I am anymore. I ask you sincerely, are you really content with staying by the princess’ side?”

Rong Zhi just smiled, not answering.

Huan Yuan continued in a low voice: “Even though you never show your

abilities besides helping the princess manage affairs in the inner court, I still think that you are capable of more than ten times of what you present to us. Your abilities stand out in the world; if you go outside, you could have power and control, and influence the whole empire. Are you really resigned to stay in this Princess' Palace, and be the male concubine and toy of a pampered and luxurious woman?" His voice was very heavy, pressing on the gloomy atmosphere, "Are you really content with this?" Huan Yuan came to the princess two years ago, and knew Rong Zhi for two years. But throughout these two years, he could never see through Rong Zhi. At first, he thought he was gentle and easy to be bullied, but later he slowly understood, how deep and profound this seemingly harmless youth really was.

Still, Rong Zhi just smiled, not answering.

Gazing at him for a long time, Huan Yuan's expression loosened, and suddenly laughed, "You are not content. Or else, why are you afraid to answer me? You cannot sincerely say you are content and willing." His appearance was very graceful and handsome; once his expression loosened, it instantly seemed like large white petals blooming in a dark place; depressing yet ethereal beauty floating among purity.

After Huan Yuan said all these words, Rong Zhi finally reacted. He reached his hand out and slowly poured himself a cup of wine; he poured it very full, and only when the wine was going to spill out of the cup did he place the flagon down, and say quietly, "Huan Yuan, do not forget, that who gave you your chance to still be alive safely today. You are the son of a sinner; if not for the princess saving you, you would be dead under multiple knives long ago. Not only are you not grateful to her, but all you think about is revolting. Did the forefathers of the Huan family teach their descendents to be devoid of gratitude?"

Huan Yuan replied, "It is undeniable that she saved me and shielded me. But her saving me was purely out of her own desire; she confines me here as being exclusively hers, and plans to let me die in this Princess' Palace. But Rong Zhi, I'm unwilling." He spoke these words in a very calm tone, a tone of total acceptance. His brows were slender, and the glowing in his eyes were like the slight luster on jade; seemingly gentle, but in reality tough and firm, "As for the forefathers of

the Huan family..... Weren't they ruined at the hands of her Liu family?"

The once glorious nobility; many years ago, even their clothing shone with brilliance; but now, all was buried under some unknown piece of earth. At troubled times like this, the winner becomes the ruler and the loser dies. He couldn't refute this.

But.....

"I'm unwilling." He said firmly.

Even though his position was reduced to his current state, he still couldn't resign to being a toy and decoration of a woman.

And he won't commit suicide to fulfill his innocence either. Life is the best gift the world could ever give; giving up one's life is the way of the cowards. There had once been a male concubine at the palace that couldn't bear to be humiliated and threw himself into the lake. Looking at his cold body, although Huan Yuan lamented for him, he didn't admire his doings at all.

Death was the easy way, so he chose life, the difficult path.

"Unwilling." Rong Zhi chuckled lightly, "Good ambition, good strength of character. But Huan Yuan, you don't have a choice."

He raised up his cup and observed the clear liquid. A little wine spilled out due to his movements, dropping onto his snowy white garments, creating a greenish stain: "You just said that I am not content. You are not me, so how would you know my thoughts?"

Seeing that Rong Zhi was getting up to leave, Huan Yuan knew he couldn't persuade him today, so he sighed, "Whatever. You are content, but I am not content. Even if I failed this time, as long as I am still alive, I will not give up. Even if I die, it would be better than suffering here."

Rong Zhi chuckled, then slowly headed out. At the door he paused his steps, "Suffering?" He asked Huan Yuan, "Do you think, that staying here in silk clothes and the best food and no worries for your life, is suffering to you?"

Huan Yuan scoffed, "You mean I should think this as a heavenly grace?"

After that slight pause of his steps, Rong Zhi continued walking out. After a

while, Huan Yuan seemed to hear a sentence sounding from outside his room, vague and indistinct; it seemed to be there, but it also seemed like an illusion he had in his absentmindedness. The sound was so distant, it had the vastness of the beginning of the world, the nostalgia of ancient prehistoric times:

“The world is a furnace; every creature and living being in it; who isn’t suffering bitterly?”

After Rong Zhi left, Chu Yu wandered around a bit more in the apricot woods, then decided to go back. When she passed the junction between the East Wing and the West Wing, she saw Jiang Yan and the other five youths that had received a new life heading to the outer court. Chu Yu nodded at them, then walked right past them.

With no concern and no looking back, once they walked out this door, they would become strangers. As a matter of fact, to Chu Yu, these people were strangers anyway, so it wasn’t hard for her to part with them at all.

From now on they would never meet again. Thinking this, the corner of Chu Yu’s lips curved upward slightly. She didn’t turn her head to look back at them.

From now on they would never meet again. Almost at the same time, Jiang Yan was also thinking this, but he couldn’t help but look back; before, all he ever thought about was to leave this hell as soon as possible, even in his dreams. But now that he was really leaving, he felt a little confused.

That woman’s figure, was free and easy; she didn’t have the superiority she used to have, making her so unfamiliar it seemed like this was the first time he ever saw her.

Chapter 19: Racing Madly on the Streets

Sending away a total of seven people, including Jiang Yan and Shen Guangzuo, two days later, other male concubines also came to Chu Yu one after another, spilling out all of Huan Yuan's plans. They also received what they wanted: freedom and future.

As for who to recommend who to specifically, due to Chu Yu being unfamiliar with her surroundings, she could only give these matters into Rong Zhi's hands, letting him take over completely.

Although Chu Yu still didn't trust Rong Zhi entirely, in such a completely unfamiliar world, if she didn't borrow others' strength, she would only be able to fly around like a fly without a head.

Some male concubines were satisfied with just leaving, but others weren't. They didn't forget to tell on others before leaving, such as tattling to her who who who what day what hour said what bad things about the princess; but those things went in from Chu Yu's left ear and went out from her right. She smiled as she nodded, but forgot all about them once she turned around.

She didn't know if three women could form a show, but she did witness how three men formed a show. If she really had the patience to sort through all these confusing relationships, she didn't know how much time she would spend on it. Better to just not pay attention to any of it, and cut through the mess cleanly.

In only a few days, almost everyone had gone. Except those that couldn't be sent away, those that didn't want to be sent away, and those that had no place to be sent to, from the original male concubines of more than twenty, only six were still living at the palace.

Even though being surrounded by a huge group of beautiful men everyday was very pleasing, after looking at them for a long time, Chu Yu would still feel dazed. Not to mention that most of them weren't staying here because they were really willing to, so if they were kept here together for long, trouble would be unavoidable. Although she killed Huan Yuan's matter in its cradle, she couldn't be sure that some Zhang Yuan or Li Yuan wouldn't hop out some time in the

future. Better to send all of them away as soon as possible. She would also be very conveniently doing them a favor, so they would have gratitude in their hearts later.

Chu Yu knew, that if she was the Princess of Shanyin from before, she would definitely not be as unable to maintain authority as she is now. But the prestige of the Princess of Shanyin was basically built up by severe methods, and she couldn't harden her own heart to imitate that. So she could only be the Chu Yu from more than a thousand years later, and use her own methods.

Although Chu Yu had originally wanted to send all of them away, in the end, she still unexpectedly kept six people.

The twelve-year-old boy she saw at the banquet the other day was named Baili Liusang. He was the one that didn't have anywhere to be sent to. After all, he was only a twelve-year-old boy, and even if he was talented, his abilities were still limited. And when the Princess of Shanyin met Liusang at first, his father and mother had already been killed by robbers. If she sent Liusang out of the palace now, he would have nowhere to go.

As for Liu Se and Mo Xiang, even though they had the chance to leave the palace, both rejected it and expressed that they were definitely going to follow beside Chu Yu, even beginning to do the first crying then fussing and at last threatening to suicide trick. About these two, Liu Se came from a very poor family, and because he heard that the Princess of Shanyin loved pretty men, he took the courage to "ambush" at a spot where the Princess of Shanyin often visited. Therefore he was taken into the palace. As for Mo Xiang, he was the toy sent to the Princess of Shanyin by some other noble. Supposedly his family had committed a great crime and had all been executed.

One of the two cried that if he was chased out he wouldn't be able to live, while the other teared up and accused Chu Yu of calling him Little Xiangxiang¹ before and now was kicking him out. At the same time, one was going to hang himself while the other threw himself into the river, as if they had arranged all of it beforehand. How could Chu Yu not know that they were only putting on a show! She had seen these methods way too many times on TV, so she had thought of hardening her heart and chasing the two out anyway, but then

worried about them trying too hard to commit suicide, and accidentally really kill themselves some day. So she could only keep them.

She just couldn't make herself do it.

Another was called Hua Cuo. He was the male concubine that was sick and so didn't attend any of the two banquets. But different from Huan Yuan's claim of illness, Hua Cuo was really sick and couldn't get out of bed. His survival depended entirely on the excellent medicine and doctors at the Princess' Palace, therefore Chu Yu couldn't send him away just like that either.

As for Huan Yuan..... Chu Yu was very conflicted over this person. Only after reading his information did Chu Yu know, that Huan Yuan's forefathers, the Huan family, was originally a powerful noble clan too. But several decades ago, because the head of the Huan family revolted, the Princess' of Shanyin's forefather Liu Yu found a chance and killed him. And the members of the Huan family who didn't participate in the revolt were placed under house arrest, and one after another killed over the decades. Leaving Huan Yuan as their only bloodline.

Two years ago, the Princess of Shanyin saw Huan Yuan by chance, and fell for him. So she thought of many ways and finally moved Huan Yuan into her palace secretly. As for whether Huan Yuan was willing or not, she didn't care.

Judging from this layer of relationship, Chu Yu's forefathers were the enemies of Huan Yuan that killed his family and murdered his entire clan. It had always been said that one and the killer of one's father could never live under the same skies; and now Chu Yu's family was the killer of his father, the killer of his mother, and the killer of his every family member. The reason why Huan Yuan didn't stab her with a knife was because he was enduring this humiliation, not because the hatred wasn't there anymore.

But the interesting thing was, as the descendant of a sinner, although Huan Yuan hated the Princess of Shanyin, he still needed to rely on the princess' power to preserve his own safety.

And the last person was Rong Zhi.

Chu Yu had asked him before whether he wanted to leave or not, but Rong Zhi

didn't answer, just smiled and recited the song "Feng Qiu Huang"². His tone was so gentle, that Chu Yu's heart beat faster and her cheeks grew hot, that she felt embarrassed and didn't ask again.

How was the life of a princess like?

As a princess, she neither needed to care about the country or the commoners, nor did she need to worry about foreign enemies or internal revolts. She had food, had drink, had shelter, had land, had power, had prestige, and beautiful men in addition to all that, so no wonder the Princess of Shanyin was so bored that she spent the most of her youth on the big and magnificent bed in her bedroom.

Now that she had already came into this body, no need to think about it, the Princess of Shanyin was probably already dead. Chu Yu didn't care about how she died, just that, since she inherited the Princess on Shanyin's body, then naturally, besides eating, drinking, whoring, and gambling..... Uh, maybe not whoring, but besides eating, drinking, and gambling, she should use her vision from more than a thousand years later to discover some new things for her to have fun with. Or else, in this time without computers, life would be lifeless and lacking fun.

Spending some time to study the Princess of Shanyin's handwriting, Chu Yu discovered that the Princess of Shanyin had always wrote in semi-cursive script. Her handwriting was very pretty, so it would very difficult to imitate it in a short time. After thinking about it again and again, Chu Yu decided to practice clerical script. Starting from the beginning, so no one could point out the difference in their handwritings.

Spending two to three days, Chu Yu was able to make her neglected handwriting look like words again. Seeing that it can now be used to fool others, though barely, Chu Yu was too lazy to make things fine or perfect, and began to execute the main task of the princess: having fun.

Staying at home was boring; all she could do was eat and drink. Now she was already bored enough to use luminous pearls as pinballs. If she let things progress themselves like this, she would probably follow the examples of ancient

people and tear silk to listen to the sound of it. So very soon, Chu Yu extended her gaze to outside the Princess' Palace.

The city that Chu Yu was now in was called Jiankang, but in the time span of more than a thousand years afterwards, it's name would be changed to Jinling, and at last — Nanjing.

The thousand year old ancient capital Nanjing; this city concentrated too much flourishes and glory, too much chaos and vicissitudes, thicker and heavier than could be imagined. Reborn in ancient times, and reborn in just this time and this place; if she didn't tour this place seriously, she would be letting down heavens' goodwill.

Now that she decided to go play, Chu Yu naturally had her own rules. If a whole crowd of guards followed behind, and she shopped around the streets with people both before and after her, what fun would that be? The only benefit of that would be if they saw some nice, handsome boy it would be easy to kidnap him. But now Chu Yu didn't have this hobby, so she didn't need that at all.

She had just cleared up a batch at home; even the six left gave her a headache. After all, she wasn't the Princess of Shanyin; she didn't have such a big appetite.

Chu Yu also didn't want to attract too much attention on the streets, so the best solution was to disguise herself. She put on men's clothes, and cut her hair shorter and tied it up, transforming into a beautiful youth.

Her appearance was originally delicate and pretty, so even if she were disguised as a male, she still stood out as good-looking.

The two sneaked out from the back door of the Princess' Palace. Passing through a remote alley, they came to a busy street.

Stores filled both sides of the street, flags fluttered in the wind, and tall willows were planted in front of some people's doors. It was springtime now, and when a warm breeze blew, catkins flowed with them in the air. Some landed on Chu Yu; Chu Yu picked the catkin up, and tossed it away after observing it carefully. Although this catkin was the same as that in the Princess' Palace and that from more than a thousand years later, Chu Yu still couldn't help but feel elated.

As she walked, Chu Yu realized that many people were gazing at her with

intense gazes. At first, it was only some young girls about sixteen or seventeen. She didn't think much about it. But later it expanded to eighty percent of the people on the streets looking at her, pointing at her, and whispering to each other at the same time.

She had never met such a situation before. Chu Yu was a little alarmed. Why were all these people looking at her? Chu Yu did think she was kinda handsome in men's clothes, but it wasn't up to the point where she could charm people like this. So why was she being stared at?

Was it because they could tell that she's a girl?

Chu Yu stopped her steps, walked towards a commoner girl closest to her, and asked: "Why are you all looking....." Before she could finish her words, the young girl shrieked, raised her hand to pull out the fabric flower clipped in her hair, and threw it towards Chu Yu.

Chu Yu felt her heart shudder, immediately backing up: "What are you doing?" Did she look so much like a bestial sexual predator? That even a young girl would throw things at her to prevent her from approaching? But if she was throwing things for self-defense, shouldn't she throw something more lethal?

Furthermore, she had looked at her own face in a basin of water before. She had thought that her appearance was pretty presentable.....

After the young girl's actions, a terrifying thing happened. All the men and women around Chu Yu took out things: some had flowers, some had wickers, some had unripened melons and fruits, and someone even had a small Chinese cabbage.....

All of them were thrown towards Chu Yu.

Crazy.

This word suddenly surfaced in Chu Yu's mind. She instinctively pulled on Yue Jiefei, covered her head, and started running.

Things were already like this. If she stayed where she was to be attacked by the people, then she would be an idiot!

Although Chu Yu could absolutely order Yue Jiefei to beat up those people or

even chase them off, she wasn't the Princess of Shanyin after all. As a young girl born in a free and equal society, she had no disdainful attitude of seeing the commoners as lowly ants. Meeting such a situation, her first reaction was not to "beat the crap out of these lowly ants for I, the Princess", but to not know what to do and therefore running away.

After a few steps, Chu Yu turned back to look, and her face went pale. The people that were throwing things at her not only didn't leave off with just throwing, they actually all started chasing her. And at the same time yelling.

Chu Yu had never seen such a parade. Her thoughts were tangled in a mess, so she didn't notice what they were yelling at all. She only wanted to escape quickly, so she pulled on Yue Jiefei and ran even faster.

These people were basically a violent mob! Even if, even if she looked like a bestial sexual predator, they still didn't need to chase her down and kill her, right?

But the faster Chu Yu ran, the more energetically those people chased. At first it was just about a dozen people chasing behind Chu Yu, but after each street she ran through, more people would be added to behind her. In the end, it even turned into a hundred people crowd!

Chu Yu and Yue Jiefei were racing madly in front, while more than a hundred people were chasing madly behind them. What a mighty and spectacular scene!

1. Little Xiangxiang: 小香香. In Chinese, when one word in a name (most usually the last word) is repeated as one's nickname, it shows affection and closeness. Can also have a meaning similar to that of "sweetheart" or "darling" because 香/xiang is basically "sweet-smelling".↵

2. "Feng Qiu Huang": 凤求凰, song/music piece played on a Chinese zither that also had lyrics. Literal meaning "phoenix searching for phoenix", and is pronounced the same way as the original title of this novel, 凤囚凰, whose literal meaning is "phoenix imprisoning phoenix".↵

Chapter 20: Beasts Oh Beasts

Racing!

Runaway!!

Crazy!!!

Chu Yu's mind was a mess. She couldn't understand why she created so much commotion when she only wanted to shop along the streets!

How could the public order and folk custom of the famous capital of the Southern Dynasties be so bad?!

During the confusion, many thoughts flashed across Chu Yu's mind, crashing into each other, crushed to pieces, then instantly flooded by anxiety. Among the chaos, Yue Jiefei's hand was let go by her at some time, and he disappeared in the split of a second. Chu Yu didn't dare look back to find him either, so she could only continue running.

The footsteps behind her made crackling and rumbling sounds, beating on Chu Yu's tight nerves. This body was not strong enough, so after just a little while Chu Yu started panting, and her steps couldn't help slowing down. But hearing the crowds pressing in on her from behind, energy was infused into her body again from nowhere. She ran faster, until once again she was out of breath.

Repeating this several times, Chu Yu finally couldn't squeeze out more potential from her body anymore. Turning around a corner, she told herself that the worst that could happen was dying, but suddenly a person appeared before her eyes and told Chu Yu quickly: "Follow me."

He led Chu Yu through complicated and crossing alleys, and not long after, they threw the crowd off. Chu Yu came to a stop and panted heavily, her mind blank. She could only feel sweat pouring out from her body.

Actually, her mind wasn't really blank. As her body tried to recover from the extreme burden, Chu Yu recalled her behavior just a moment ago. Just then, when she saw so many ancient people suddenly crowd around aggressively, she panicked, and didn't even have the time to think what was the best way to deal

with the situation. All she could do was instinctively run.

The person beside her seemed to say something. After a few seconds of pause did Chu Yu come back to her senses: “Sir, what did you say?” Her voice was naturally low, plus she was still panting from all the running, so all the female characteristics of her voice were covered up.

The person who saved Chu Yu had a gentlemanly appearance; his clothing was very sumptuous, so obviously he came from a wealthy family too. Looking at Chu Yu’s pretty features at a close distance, he praised in his heart, and didn’t hold a grudge against Chu Yu for not listening to him before. He repeated his words: “My name is Pei Shu. Sir, is this the first time you came out alone?”

Chu Yu nodded, and asked astonishedly, “How did you know?”

Pei Shu laughed, “I knew by your reaction just a while ago. You actually didn’t need to be afraid, those people didn’t have any bad intentions.”

Chu Yu was still in shock, so she subconsciously blurted out: “That counts as having no bad intentions? They even started throwing things at me. If this is not called having bad intentions, then what is having bad intentions?”

Pei Shu replied, “Sir, you don’t know. Actually, they were just trying to express their admiration of a beautiful man, therefore the crowd got so excited. When you started running, you stimulated them, leading to them chasing you even more crazily.”

Chu Yu just stared. She couldn’t believe what she heard: “Are you kidding me?” This was close to the celebrity-chasing of the twenty-first century, but what did she had that was worth chasing?

Pei Shu smiled, “Don’t find this odd, the culture here has always been like this. Really, if you respond appropriately, there wouldn’t be such a commotion. Or you can bring several guards with you when you come out from now on, so you can keep a distance from your admirers.” Seeing that Chu Yu’s clothing was delicate and elegant, he could tell that Chu Yu was probably from an unordinary family, so he purposefully wanted to make friends with her. That’s why he used his familiarity with the streets to help her out.

Listening to Pei Shu’s explanation, Chu Yu finally understood. This was the folk

custom that had been passed down since the time of Pan An¹. Once people saw a beautiful man on the streets, everyone would throw flowers, melons, and fruits at him, to express their admiration. Chu Yu couldn't help but feel numb when she heard this; thinking back, it must have been really hard for Pan An to keep his life under the attacks of so many melons and fruits.

There was another handsome man in ancient China named Wei Jie², and like Pan An, he was extremely handsome. But just how handsome was he? It was said that when he stood in a crowd, it was like a shining pearl or a beautiful jade being put among a heap of rubble. Back then, when he first came to Nanjing, which is basically Jiankang, the local folk heard that a beautiful man came, so huge crowds came out to watch him; the streets were so full it was hard to move a single step. And they literally "watched" him, a pretty youth that was weak and sickly, to death. But combined with her own encounter today, Chu Yu suspected that the pretty boy from the Wei family was stoned to death by all the flowers and fruits.

This was a time period that worshipped beauty, especially masculine beauty.

These days, you not only needed a pretty appearance to be a beautiful man; you also needed a nimble and fit body.

Chu Yu was stunned for a long time, then finally let out her breath and laughed: "Haven't I learned today." Telling herself in her heart that it wasn't her looking too bestial, but the local folk were too bestial, pouncing onto every single handsome man they see. Judging by that, it seems like her disguise wasn't a total failure.

After resting for a little while, the two chose a quiet place to stroll. After some conversations, Chu Yu understood that she was just like half a pail of water; most of the times all she did was listen, and at places where she could understand she would sporadically add in one or two sentences of her opinion. Her silent, elegant smile made her seem calm and profound; plus her opinions were unique, so Pei Shu admired her even more.

What Pei Shu talked about was mostly poetry. Although Chu Yu wasn't an expert in ancient Chinese literature, this didn't hinder her from pretending to be clever. After all, she had the essence of more than a thousand years of poetry

stored in her brain, so she surpassed Pei Shu a lot just on knowledge. Therefore, every time she spoke, although it was only a couple of words, she would always get the point.

Pei Shu was purposefully trying to make friends with Chu Yu, and Chu Yu wanted to meet some outside-world people too, to help her with further understanding this world, so the two began talking more and more agreeably. Although they didn't know what the other was thinking about, and the surface, they seemed like old friends.

Time passed quickly as they conversed. Pei Shu remembered that he still had stuff to get to, so he bid Chu Yu farewell. After two steps, he turned back again, and laughed: "After talking with you for so long, I still don't know how to address you, sir."

Chu Yu smiled gently, "Call me Yu Zichu." Knowing that the name of the Princess of Shanyin wasn't some good name, she didn't want to tell Pei Shu her real name.

"Ah, so it's brother Zichu." Pei Shu smiled, "Three days later I will be hosting a poetry banquet with music, flowing water, and a feast at the Pingding Mountain outside the city. Will brother Zichu be willing to attend?" Seeing that Chu Yu had insightful opinions, he took it for granted that Chu Yu would be good at composing poetry. How would he know that Chu Yu was just taking advantage over the time periods, and was just stealing other people's pristine.

Pausing for a second, he added in a seemingly careless way, "At that time, Master Thousand-Gold will also come." Although he seemed to be carelessly mentioning, Chu Yu could tell that there was an unsuppressable feeling close to boasting in his voice, as if he were saying, "The superstar is also attending, so if you don't come, it would be such a pity."

Although Pei Shu was deceived, Chu Yu knew clearly what her own level was. She was just about to reject, but suddenly a thought flashed across her mind, and she agreed: "Sure, I will definitely be there." Although she had different intentions, at the same time, Pei Shu's words and actions made it so she couldn't help but be curious about that Master Thousand-Gold. Don't know what kind of amazing figure he would be.

1. Pan An: 潘安, a famously handsome man in Chinese history. A Chinese idiom originated from him that means “so handsome that when going out in a carriage, fruits fill the carriage” (掷果盈车). This guy was briefly mentioned in Ch.3 in a list of names.[↩](#)
2. Wei Jie: 卫玠, another famously handsome man in Chinese history. Also briefly mentioned in Ch.3 in the list of names.[↩](#)

Chapter 21: Last-Minute Cramming

Only after watching Pei Shu leave, did Chu Yu depressingly remember that she didn't know where she now was at all. She had been so nervous that she forgot to memorize the way, and now she was probably lost.

She looked around and randomly chose a direction to try to find her way back, but a figure suddenly appeared beside her. The figure was absolutely silent and undetectable, materializing as if a ghost. If not for such things happening before at the Princess' Palace, Chu Yu would probably be screaming now.

Of course, the person was Yue Jiefei, who had been accidentally separated from Chu Yu. He looked in the direction that Pei Shu left, and said: "Princess, do you not want to bring that person back?"

Chu Yu was just about to instinctively ask why she would bring him back, but before the words came out of her mouth she suddenly understood: the Princess of Shanyin probably made Yue Jiefei do things like this many times, seeing attractive males on the streets then letting Yue Jiefei hit them unconscious and take them back to the palace. Now that she thought about it, Pei Shu was pretty good-looking, just that under the comparison of all those in the Princess' Palace, he could only be said as average.

Good and bad only come under comparison. Only now did Chu Yu realize how good the quality of the men the Princess of Shanyin collected was, but she let more than half of them go so quickly. If, she was saying if, if the Princess of Shanyin had a spirit, maybe that spirit would die again out of anger at her.

"No need....." Accompanied by a sigh in her heart, Chu Yu said lightly, then suddenly remembered, "Why did you not help me escape when I was running away?" Looking at Yue Jiefei, he didn't seem to be separated from her like she expected, but instead was following behind her this whole time. Why did he not extend a helping hand and save her; did he intentionally wanted to see her be a joke?

Yue Jiefei was surprised: "Princess, did you not like that?"

Chu Yu was wordless.

So it was because she didn't order, therefore Yue Jiefei thought she was enjoying the pleasure of being chased by. At this time there really were noble young men who had such a hobby; being admired and chased by so many people, was a very big glory. The extremists even compared who had more people chasing behind them.

The two chose a quiet little path back to the Princess' Palace. When they passed by an alley, Chu Yu heard a woman's scolding voice sound from the alley: "If you two still don't obey me, I'll let the bad princess capture you and take you away!"

The bad princess?

Something moved in Chu Yu's heart. She involuntarily stopped her steps, and glanced towards the alley; between two lines of disorderly wooden houses, a sturdy woman held a dishrag that one couldn't tell what its original color was with one hand, and had her other hand on her hip as she scolded the two children beside her.

The children were a boy and a girl, dirty like they had just rolled around on the ground. Both were about six or seven years old; hearing these words, the boy immediately became obedient, trembling and instantly becoming still. But the girl still wouldn't become obedient, instead refuting with her immature voice: "I'm not afraid at all, the bad princess only captures boys, she doesn't capture girls."

The bad princess in their mouths.....

Chu Yu had a very bad feeling rising up in her chest. She subconsciously glanced towards Yue Jiefei, who returned a very sure glance: yes, they are talking about you.

Chu Yu felt very depressed, saying to herself, sigh, the Princess of Shanyin really has a bad name; even peasant women used her as the big bad wolf to scare little children. Good thing she didn't tell Pei Shu her true name, or else he'd probably have run away faster than a hare.

But speaking back, even if she was going to capture men, it should be at least those of Rong Zhi or Huan Yuan's level. Will she ever target a raggedy and dirty little kid like this?

Seeing that she wasn't able to scare the girl, the woman immediately changed her expression, and scolded: "The bad princess doesn't capture girls, but the demon sorcerer does. Be careful that he will capture both of you; then he'd get a pair of boy and girl."

Hearing this, the little girl seemed to be very frightened, and also became obedient.

Chu Yu's eyes brightened, thinking that there's actually someone even more notorious than her. Didn't know what kind of figure that demon sorcerer was, or what remarkable things he has done, that he could frighten children even more than her name?

With questions in her heart, Chu Yu returned to the Princess' Palace, ending this travel of a fine start and a bad finish.

Chu Yu stood at the door of Snow Shower Garden. This was her second time here; last time was when she wandered around and saw Huan Yuan and Jiang Yan meeting each other, but this time, she was here to do some last-minute cramming.

Although she had the essence and knowledge of more than a thousand years in her brain, Chu Yu wasn't planning to rely on this entirely.

Literature; due to the difference in time periods, there would also be a difference between the angle and perspective of enjoyment. For say, if she wrote a Yuan song¹ at the poetry banquet, or maybe even modern prose poetry, probably no one would enjoy it. Therefore her utmost priority now was to learn more about the trends and popular styles in contemporary poetry circles. People say when you sharpen your spear right before battle, even if it doesn't shine, it would still be bright; at least she would be able to pretend she's some expert and put on a show.

When she learned that the largest collection of books was in Rong Zhi's Snow Shower Garden, Chu Yu debated in her heart whether she should come, and unconsciously walked here while she was still debating. Standing at the entrance, she hesitated.

She was a little afraid to see Rong Zhi.

The situation a few days ago still replayed in her mind clearly. As she finished dealing with the others in the palace, and turned to ask him whether he wanted to leave, the youth whose expression was so elegant it seemed unreachable, gazed at her with his bottomless and profound irises; he seemed to be smiling, but seemed to be not smiling too, as he slowly said:

“There is a beauty, whom I cannot forget after seeing her. Just one day not seeing her, and I miss her so much I could go crazy.

I’m like the male phoenix soaring in the skies, searching everywhere across the earth for the female phoenix. Unfortunately, the beauty doesn’t live close to me.

I use the melody of the Chinese zither to replace the love in my heart, to express my emotions and feelings. When can you promise to marry me, and comfort all my tos and fros to see you?

I wish my virtues could match yours, so we could hold hands and be together. This feeling of not knowing whether we could fly freely together, is making me sink deep in melancholy and killing me.”

This was the song “Feng Qiu Huang”², which was used to pay court to a lady. Summarized, it basically says a person saw a beautiful girl, fell deeply in love with her, and wishes to marry her and be together with her.

Chu Yu couldn’t help but frown. Just what did Rong Zhi mean? Was he using this song to express his love for the Princess of Shanyin? But what was there about the Princess of Shanyin that was worth loving? Or, was he like Liu Se and Mo Xiang, just fawning on the princess and trying to gain favor? But if he was like that, how could the expression in his eyes be so graceful and elegant?

His appearance was obviously not the top; not to mention Liu Se and Mo Xiang, just among the male concubines she sent away, there were seven or eight better-looking than him. The only difference he had from them was that elegant and unreachable expression, free from all the others, neither resistant, nor fawning.

Was this the reason the Princess of Shanyin favored him over all the others?

Suddenly, Chu Yu realized, that she feared Rong Zhi the most in her heart,

more than anyone else she saw or met since her rebirth. Whether it were the toady and fawning Liu Se and Mo Xiang, the haughty but forbearing Huan Yuan, the strong but consequently easy to break Jiang Yan, or the snob Shen Guangzuo that jumped sides, all these people had at least one aspect of them that could be seen through. As long as one had something he wanted, it wouldn't be difficult to find his weakness. But Rong Zhi was different; he seemed like he didn't need anything, didn't care about anything, didn't even want freedom.....

It wouldn't be strange if Rong Zhi was an idiot who knew nothing, wanted nothing and wasted his days. But his thoughts were so keen and thorough, and he dealt with matters so perfectly and orderly; even Huan Yuan had wanted to have a good relationship with him. How could a person like this, be willing to spend his life as such an awkward position in the palace of a princess with such a bad reputation?

But recalling that "Feng Qiu Huang" again, Chu Yu had an unbelievable sense of absurdity: Rong Zhi, could he really be in love with the Princess of Shanyin? No one would want to believe that. Or, did this "Feng Qiu Huang", have some other deep meaning in it?

Aware that she had been standing by the entrance for too long, Chu Yu pursed her lips, pushed open the door, and stepped into the garden.

Among the refreshing air in the garden, under a buttonwood tree, on top of the bluestone platform, sat and leaned a leisure figure.

Rong Zhi's white clothing spread across the stone platform like clouds. A bamboo scroll was set beside, and he leaned on the buttonwood, his usually profound and bottomless eyes closed. His sleeping position seemed completely unguarded.

Chu Yu thought for a while, then softened her steps and walked towards the pavilion behind the woods. But when she passed by Rong Zhi, she stepped on something, and instantly the crisp sound of stones colliding sounded in the woods. Startled, before Chu Yu could make another move, Rong Zhi had already awoken.

"Ah, it's the princess." Rong Zhi rubbed his sleepy eyes lazily. He didn't stand up or salute when he saw it was Chu Yu, instead just smiled: "Does the Princess

need anything, coming to my place?”

After a slight hesitation, Chu Yu blurted out, “I want to borrow some poetry collections to read.”

Rong Zhi was a little surprised, and looked at her with an inexplicable expression, “I remember, that the Princess seemed to not like reading poetry or literature before.”

In that moment, the springtime and verdant garden felt somewhat chilly under all the unspoken words.

Not even blinking an eye, Chu Yu said casually, “I want to read them now, is that not okay?” She knew that Rong Zhi had already started suspecting, but as long as she didn’t leave definite evidence, there was nothing to be nervous or afraid of.

After a short period of silence, Rong Zhi smiled: “Just that if the Princess wants to look for them herself, it might be not too easy. Rather, the Princess should let me help her.”

Coming to Snow Shower Garden’s library, Chu Yu finally understood, what Rong Zhi meant when he said not too easy.

1. Yuan song: 元曲, a style/form of poetry popular during the Yuan Dynasty.[↩](#)
2. “Feng Qiu Huang”: 凤求凰, a song Sima Xiangru, a scholar, used to express his love to Zhuo Wenjun, a beautiful girl. After hearing this song, Zhuo Wenjun sneaked out to meet Sima Xiangru and fell for him, then eloped with him. There’s another footnote on this song in Ch.19 which I forgot to put in sry... it has some other information y’all should go check it out[↩](#)

Chapter 22: Three-Day Heart-Lock Pill

First impression of the library: big.

Very big. There were seven to eight large rooms, all filled with lines of bookshelves. Each bookshelf was also completely filled up; there was almost no empty space to be seen.

Second impression of the library: disorderly.

This was Chu Yu's impression after looking carefully. On the bookshelves were paper books, silk scrolls, and bamboo scrolls. Bundles of bamboo scrolls were wrapped in silk, light blue colored book wrappers and neatly stacked on the bookshelves, clean and without a speck of dirt. The light smell of books and the scent of sandalwood were mixed together in the air, showing that Rong Zhi takes very good care of his library on a day-to-day basis.

But the disorderly Chu Yu was talking about was not that Rong Zhi threw books around or made a mess, but instead the placements of these books had almost no pattern or order. Bamboo scrolls and paper books were mixed and placed together; although each were set up neatly, overall, the library seemed somewhat disorderly.

And these books weren't sorted along the information they contained either. Instead, all genres were mixed together, making it very hard for one to find what one wanted.

Third impression of the library: miscellaneous.

Chu Yu randomly flipped through some books, and discovered that the diversity of the collection of books in this library was way beyond of her imagination. Mountains and rivers, geography, politics, poetry and literature, folk stories, records of strange events and miscellaneous rumors; there was almost everything.

Rong Zhi stood silently at the entrance of the library, watching Chu Yu walk around the bookshelves and pick up books to flip through hastily, but didn't walk up to help her. He just stood where he was, watching quietly; an emotion

inexplicable like folded clouds unfolded slowly in his black and bottomless irises.

He didn't say anything, didn't do anything, just watched for a long time, as if in a daze. Only then did he slowly open his mouth, and from memory, instructed Chu Yu on where she could find the poetry books she was looking for, and also helped pick out poetry collections himself.

"The seventh book on the third grid of the second row of the bookshelf on the left." Following Rong Zhi's guidance, Chu Yu correctly found the book he was talking about, admiring his memory a million times in her heart. So disorderly arranged, yet he could still remember the exact position each book was placed; this human brain was comparable to a computer.

Holding more than twenty books in her arms, Chu Yu's arms felt sore and painful. She turned to ask Rong Zhi for help, but saw him holding ten books and saying with some difficulty: "Princess, I can't carry this anymore, please help with the burden." Saying this, he walked over, and added ten more books onto Chu Yu.

Chu Yu glared at him, wordless. But Rong Zhi's expression was completely undisturbed, as if this was the way it should be. Thinking about it, for all these days, she had never seen Rong Zhi pick up anything heavier than a bamboo scroll; maybe he really was very weak or something. Chu Yu gritted her teeth and bore with it, serving as Hercules for once.

As Chu Yu slowly walked out with the books piled in her arms, Rong Zhi, who had been pretending to continue looking for poetry collections, stopped his movements and looked deeply at Chu Yu from an angle she couldn't see.

The air was filled with the sweet-smell of books and scrolls; the young girl's appearance was a deceiving elegance. Although she seemed to be having a hard time from the burden in her arms, the expression under the oppression was still bright as a breeze in the mountains; gracefulness was also in her eyes.

In a trance, Rong Zhi seemed to see another figure, vague and faint, separating from Chu Yu's elegant features then overlapping with it again.

His hand subconsciously reached over his heart. Only until Chu Yu exited the library and her figure completely disappeared, did he come back to realization from his dream-like trance: who, was the person he just saw?

After two days of locking herself up and burying herself in books, Chu Yu felt so dizzy, she felt like she returned to her before life, when she went to college. Every time before a test, everyone would study like it's the end of the world, trying their hardest to memorize the main points in their textbooks. Relying on these methods of cramming right before exams, she actually went through all four years of college safely, never getting to the point where she needed to retake a test.

Chu Yu had long been used to this type of cramming and have done it hundreds of times, but Rong Zhi, who had been watching her these two days, couldn't understand at all. After these two days, he finally couldn't resist asking her, "Princess, you've been working so hard to read these books; are you going to do something?"

Chu Yu put down the book in her hand, rubbing her sore eyes, "I can't help it. I have been invited to attend a poetry banquet, and I have to do at least some preparation."

Rong Zhi laughed: "So that's why. Princess, you want to compose poetry yourself?" That wouldn't be too easy.

Chu Yu thought for a while, then said, "Not really, just that if I'm the only person that didn't compose poetry at the banquet, it'd be a little inappropriate."

Rong Zhi pursed his lips and said gently, "If the princess is worrying about this, then you really don't need to work so hard. All you need to do is bring a certain person when you go attend the poetry banquet."

"Who? You?" Chu Yu squinted slightly, finding it very amusing. Could she cheat at a poetry banquet?

Rong Zhi shook his head: "What am I? The person I was talking about, is Huan Yuan. As long as you bring him, I can assure you that no one would care if you composed any poetry at all."

He paused for a second, then continued, "But Huan Yuan's identity shouldn't be known by others, so the Princess should control it more tightly." As he said this, he walked towards the end of the bookshelf. He pressed his hand on the

wall, and when he turned his palm, a hidden compartment popped out. He took out two porcelain bottles from the hidden compartment; one had blue lotus patterns¹ on it, the other was clear white all over.

Chu Yu was a little nervous and a little curious at the same time, staring her eyes wide open at the two porcelain bottles: could they be the legendary poison?

Rong Zhi examined the two porcelain bottles carefully, then at last gripped the one with lotus patterns in his hand while putting the clear white one back: “This drug is called Three-day Heart-lock Pill. If consumed, one would feel weak and tired for about three days. He would just barely be able to walk; running would already be very very difficult, so not to mention using force. This way, we needn’t worry that Huan Yuan use this chance to escape.”

“Will this, cause damage to his body?”

“Naturally there will be some. After three days, Huan Yuan will need to lie in bed and be nursed back to health for half a month, and only then will he return to normal.” Rong Zhi said very casually, as if this weren’t anything big at all. He handed the drug bottle in his hand to Chu Yu.

Chu Yu stared at him, but her hand didn’t extend to accept it: “Did Huan Yuan offend you before?” If not, why would he encourage her to give Huan Yuan such a damaging drug?

She suddenly thought of something. Since Rong Zhi’s power within the inner court was so big, then had he also went through the scrolls that recorded the information of every male concubine?

If this was true, then not seeing Rong Zhi’s record on the scrolls would be completely normal.

She also remembered, that there used to be several male concubines at the palace who had been executed for not obeying the rules. Did Rong Zhi also do that?

Hearing her words, Rong Zhi was shocked for a moment. He looked up to meet Chu Yu’s gaze; in his ebony black irises, an inexplicable emotion rolled like the clouds; he had always looked so elegant and profound, so the shock

accompanied by a slight waver in his expression, was like a confidential mask suddenly cracking, exposing a corner of a stunning face.

His expression had always been calm and elegant, so this momentary but unusual fluctuation instead made him have an uniquely enchanting beauty; Chu Yu almost went into a stupor. Only after a while did she regain senses, but she still felt guilty under his gaze. Even though she knew there was nothing for her to be guilty about, being gazed at by such a pair of eyes, she still couldn't help but feel guilty..... Not just feeling guilty, her heart also skipped a handful of beats.

“Since the Princess couldn't bear to let Huan Yuan suffer, then let Yue Jiefei pay attention and look after him tightly. If this person was released to outside, he will definitely become a useful weapon against the Princess.” Rong Zhi smiled slightly. The abnormal expression just a moment ago was like a phantom, wiped away without leaving any trace. He put the drug bottle back where he took it, “Rong Zhi still has business to attend to, so will be leaving now.” He didn't even do the simplest courtesy, leaving without looking back.

No matter how slow Chu Yu was, she still knew that Rong Zhi seemed to be angry, and the reason for this anger was her. But she couldn't figure out why that fellow was angry. All she wanted was to not harm people; was there anything wrong with that?

Just what is that fellow fussing about? Can't he just tell her what the problem was? What with the attitude?

Ancient people are so ridiculous!

1. Lotus patterns: 莲纹, type of patterning in Chinese porcelain art that composed of lotus flowers and creepers branching out from them.↵

Chapter 23: Fragrance Filling the Bed

Ridiculously, Rong Zhi left, and even more ridiculously, Chu Yu stayed where she was. She had a book in her hand, but she couldn't read a single word.

She thought it over again and again, but just couldn't understand what Rong Zhi was mad about. As it was, Rong Zhi's position in the Princess' Palace, could be said was only under the Princess of Shanyin and above everyone else; even the Princess' husband might not be comparable with him. And according to You Lan, Rong Zhi treats people very kindly; he wasn't narrow-minded.

All she was going to do was taking Huan Yuan out of the palace; not going to give him any supreme gift or anything. Could Rong Zhi not be able tolerate even this?

The more she thought about it, the more Chu Yu's thoughts got tangled up. Unknowingly, the sun crept to the west; light shone into the room from a window, striking on the open book and Chu Yu's hand, giving her fingers a slim layer of golden brilliance. Chu Yu knew she wouldn't be able to digest any information in such a state, so she could only put down the book, return to the East Wing for dinner, and wash and prepare for bed. At that time, the sky had already completely darkened.

Chu Yu remembered that tomorrow was the day Pei Shu arranged the poetry banquet, so she didn't want to go to bed too late. As she walked back to her room to go to sleep, her heart was filled with thoughts, so she didn't notice the strange expressions of the guards in the courtyard before her bedroom, or You Lan's weird glances.

Pushing open the door to her room, Chu Yu, as usual, instructed that You Lan didn't need to come in to wait on her. When she went in she naturally pulled the door close behind her.

There were no lights in the room, but through these days, Chu Yu had already memorized clearly the positions of all the furnishings in the room, so she very smoothly walked to the edge of her bed. She put her hand at her waist, about to undress and climb onto the bed, but before she could do so, she smelled a sense

of warm, gentle, faint, and vague fragrance in the air.

Chu Yu frowned. Originally, this room always had incense burning in it, but Chu Yu decided that with all the windows and door closed when the incense burned, air couldn't circulate properly, plus she couldn't get used to fragrance enveloping her everyday, so she ordered for the incense to be removed. After these days, the fragrance in the room already slowly dissipated, but now she could smell it again. She was just going to yell for people and ask, but then realized that this fragrance didn't seem to be incense, and she seemed to have smelled it somewhere before.

After thinking about it for a while, Chu Yu squinted her eyes, and by the dim light in the room, she could faintly see a human lump bulging under the quilt on her bed.

Chu Yu just looked at it quietly, then walked to the wall and lit up the lantern hanging there. A not-so-bright yellow light instantly filled the room, helping Chu Yu see the person on her bed clearly. Almost the whole body, including the head, of that person was buried in the quilt, only showing a head of smooth, black hair that was soft as silk spreading across the bed.

Chu Yu walked back to the edge of her bed, crossed her arms in front of her chest, and spoke lightly: "Come out."

That person slowly climbed up, and as Chu Yu expected, it was Mo Xiang. The unique fragrance on him was only his and no one else's; if not for smelling this fragrance, she wouldn't have noticed there was a person on her bed.

Mo Xiang propped his body up lazily, the silk quilt following his movements and sliding down. Bit by bit, his smooth neck, his round shoulders, his slender arms, and his slim waist and body, showed. His skin was fair as jade, his expression dream-like, and his slender phoenix eyes glittered, making him astonishingly enchanting. Accompanied by the fragrance around his body, he was virtually stunning.

But Chu Yu wasn't moved, just gazing at him coldly. Mo Xiang seemed to be able to know what she was thinking; he bit down on his cherry red lips, and he looked down, as if about to cry, but tears didn't fall, just staying in his eyes; he said softly, "Princess, it's already been so many days, do you really not miss Mo

Xiang at all?”

Chu Yu frowned, but didn't speak.

Mo Xiang's eyelashes trembled slightly, and a shining tear dropped down: “Mo Xiang is very scared, Mo Xiang originally was a toy sent by master, so besides serving master, doesn't know how to do anything. If Princess doesn't want Mo Xiang anymore, Mo Xiang wouldn't know what to do; is the Princess tired of Mo Xiang, and is going to send Mo Xiang to someone else?”

Chu Yu was going to scold him at first, but seeing his body trembling slightly, unable to control himself anymore, her heart softened and she said gently, “Don't worry at all. Even though I don't love..... bed matters anymore, I still definitely won't do that to you. If you really don't want to leave, as long as I'm here, as long as the Princess' Palace is here, there will be food and clothing for you. Even if you want to stay here for the rest of your life, it's fine.” Chu Yu sighed in her heart. Looking at this situation, Mo Xiang probably has been through many hard times. Therefore, he didn't have a sense of security, even going so far as to climb onto her bed, wanting to earn something with his body.

Finally sending away the grateful Mo Xiang, Chu Yu called the guards over, and inquired: “Why did you let him in?” Hadn't she announce long ago to not let men in easily? Lucky it was Mo Xiang. If it was someone who had killing intent, and stabbed her while she slept.....

The guards answered respectfully: “Master Rong brought him here, so we thought it was on the Princess' order.”

Chu Yu was silent for a moment, then nodded, and summoned servant girls to come change the bedsheet and quilts that had been drenched in Mo Xiang's fragrance. When she finally lay down on the bed, she was already very weary.

Although there were still many questions in her heart, weariness and darkness enveloped her, and Chu Yu slowly fell asleep.

Mo Xiang wrapped his body with thin clothing. As he walked out of the East Wing, he still had a sad expression on his face; but the moment he walked into the West Wing, his expression instantly changed. If Chu Yu was here, she would

definitely be so astonished she wouldn't be able to speak; the Mo Xiang now, the expression in his charming irises was calm and determined; although his body was weak, it seemed to contain undestroyable toughness.

The Hidden Fragrance Garden in the West Wing was Mo Xiang's residence. Originally, there had been another male concubine living with him, but he had already left.

Approaching the main room of Hidden Fragrance Garden, one could see a person standing inside the room. He had his back to Mo Xiang; his snowy white garments draped to the ground, and his figure was aloof and cold. In the darkness, he seemed like floating ice.

Mo Xiang walked up, and half-knelt behind that person, saying: "Greetings, Master Rong."

The person turned around, then bent down and helped Mo Xiang up, "How many times have I said, whether it's in private or in public, don't salute me so greatly." It's unable in public, and no need here.

The corners of his lips had on a gentle and light smile, and his pitch-black irises were profound and immeasurable.

It was Rong Zhi.

Chapter 24: Toasted Wine and Punished Wine

The night was silent as the sea.

Four guards followed behind Rong Zhi, who was carrying a tray; on the tray was a flagon and a white jade cup. The five walked into Distant Dwelling.

And the guards at the entrance didn't halt them.

At this time, Huan Yuan had not yet went to sleep; he was sitting under a light with a book in his hand. He appeared to be reading, but his gaze was unfocused, and his thoughts elsewhere. The sound of the door being pushed open woke him, and he turned to see Rong Zhi walking in with a smile on his face. Huan Yuan's heart sank, instantly becoming as cold as the night.

Rong Zhi had a lazy and causal smile on his face, and his gaze was elegant and gentle. But Huan Yuan knew, this person rarely had any expression other than that leisure one. Although he had never seen for himself, he could imagine, even when this person was killing people, he would not show the brutality of bloodshed.

Then, what was he planning to do now?

His gaze landing on the tray Rong Zhi carried, Huan Yuan had a guess in his heart, and his expression also became cautious: "It's so late now. Master Rong coming to Distant Dwelling, is there something to instruct Huan Yuan?"

Rong Zhi smiled slightly, and said, "Bright people don't speak dark words. Huan Yuan, I don't want to waste time getting to the point in front of you; drink this cup of mine, and I'll leave."

Huan Yuan put the book down, and answered faintly: "What if I'm not willing to?"

Rong Zhi laughed, "What do you think I brought all these people here for?" What he meant was, if Huan Yuan wouldn't cooperate and drink this toasted wine, he would only let people force him to drink punished wine.

It's not a matter of him willing to or not.

Huan Yuan moved his gaze to the flagon. As if knowing what he was thinking, Rong Zhi said lazily, “Don’t worry. I’m not here to kill you, but I have other purposes of making you drink this wine. Make your decision quickly, Huan Yuan.”

Knowing that he had no other choice, Huan Yuan took the cup and held it steady for a servant to fill it, then without any hesitation, lifted his head and swallowed the wine in one gulp. The wine had a slight sweet taste, but when it passed through his throat there was a faint bitter taste too. He knew some other ingredient was added to the wine, but he didn’t know what.

Rong Zhi smiled: he could understand Huan Yuan’s attitude. Although this person had exceptional talent, due to his field of vision and experiences being limited, he couldn’t help having some scholarly temper that he couldn’t put down. Even if he blatantly knew that this cup of wine was poisoned, to not lose face, he would still voluntarily drink it.

After he drank the wine, Huan Yuan didn’t feel anything different in his body. There wasn’t the excruciating pain he expected, nor was there dizziness. While he was still confused, Rong Zhi had already left with the people he brought.

In this room, Huan Yuan was confused and puzzled; in that room, Chu Yu had a peaceful but dreamless sleep.

The next morning, after waking up, Chu Yu dressed herself and prepared to go outside. But the moment she pushed the door open, she saw Rong Zhi standing outside, about to raise his hand to knock on the door.

“Good morning, Princess.” He smiled, his gaze loose as clouds, as if the unhappy parting yesterday was only an illusion.

Chu Yu was also happy to pretend nothing happened. Even though she wanted to interrogate him about why he sent men onto her bed, she was pretty sure that Rong Zhi did lots of these before, so she couldn’t say anything. She just smiled and nodded.

The two walked shoulder to shoulder. Rong Zhi asked casually, “Princess, are you going to go find Huan Yuan?”

After keeping silent for some time, Chu Yu nodded: “Yes, I am going to take

him out.” She also understood, that it would be very hard to improve her poetic talent in a short time, so no matter if it works or not, since Rong Zhi suggested it, she will try to bring Huan Yuan along. At the same time, this was a chance for her to attempt building a friendly relationship with Huan Yuan.

She didn’t want to forever be looked at hostilely, nor was she willing to get rid of the origin of the hostility. So she could only find a way to get rid of the hostility.

Rong Zhi looked at Chu Yu’s male garments and laughed lightly, “The way the princess is now, if walked on the streets, will probably be very admired by many people.”

Hearing his words, Chu Yu remembered her experience from three days ago, and she instantly paled. But she was going to go attend a poetry banquet, and she can’t just go in women’s clothing or dress raggedly.

Rong Zhi seemed confident with a plan: “If the princess doesn’t dislike the idea, I can make some slight modifications for the princess.”

Two hours later, when Chu Yu walked out of Snow Shower Garden, her appearance was greatly changed. Rong Zhi used some drugs to help her modify her appearance. This wasn’t disguise; all they did was darken the skin tone of her face, and made her less attractive, to ensure that she wouldn’t be chased due to her overly beautiful appearance.

Estimating that it was about time, Chu Yu went to go find Huan Yuan. At first, she worried about whether or not she could find him, but she had just approached Distant Dwelling when she crossed paths with her target. Huan Yuan and Liusang were walking towards her from a distance; Liusang was clutching Huan Yuan’s hand, looking very dependant.

The moment she saw Liusang, Chu Yu couldn’t help but curse that the Princess of Shanyin was a beast. Although she had already learned that the Princess of Shanyin didn’t really do anything to Liusang, but judging by the situation, it was very obvious that this princess wanted to play cultivating; raise and train a handsome youth for herself to use. Just having this thought was already very bestial.

Huan Yuan’s head was tilted, and seemed to be telling Liusang something; he

only saw Chu Yu when they were already very close. His expression became a little stiff as he stood where he was, not walking forward but not turning away or backing up either. Contrastingly, Liusang yelped and rushed up, hugging Chu Yu's arm and exclaiming: "Princess, why are you wearing men's clothing?" Liusang was only up to Chu Yu's shoulders; he lifted his head, and as he said this, his big, watery, and shining eyes gazed at Chu Yu.

This pair of big eyes was so innocent and cute, that when Chu Yu saw it, her heart couldn't help but soften; thinking about Liusang's background, she pulled out her hugged arm and patted his shoulders comfortingly: "I want to go out for a walk, and it's more convenient with these clothes on."

She had just finished her words, when she saw Liusang's eyes suddenly glow with bright radiance; he once again hugged Chu Yu's arm, and snuggled up to Chu Yu and rubbed hard against her body: "Princess, I want to go out to play too, can you please take me with you?"

The tips of Liusang's fine and soft black hair trembled slightly, his tender cheeks making people's index fingers itch, really wanting to pinch it. Chu Yu wasn't lustful; it's just that she couldn't help but be fond of things that are so like soft and furry little animals. She moved her fingers around a bit, suppressing her urge to start pinching: "Okay, I can take you with me, but you must remember, to call me Master outside. Don't expose my identity."

Of course, Liusang nodded his head violently. His wish being fulfilled, he happily hugged Chu Yu and rubbed again and again, like a cute little kitten. Being rubbed by his tender little face, Chu Yu's heart started to itch, and she told herself that no wonder the Princess of Shanyin was destroying young sprouts; just by him rubbing her like this, if she was just a little more vulgar, she'd also not be able to resist.....

Now that he himself was permitted to go outside, Liusang glanced at Huan Yuan, asking for a foot when given an inch: "Princess..... Master, can we take elder brother Huan with us? Please?"

Chu Yu had had this idea anyway, so she glanced at Huan Yuan; his eyes were looking at the ground, as if not caring at all. She smiled, "Okay."

Hearing her words, Huan Yuan, who was cold and distant the whole time,

couldn't help but look up in shock. He looked at Chu Yu as if he couldn't believe it; Chu Yu smiled at him, and he immediately fixed his expression, returning to his usual indifference.

"Princess." It was Yue Jiefei who called her. Chu Yu shot a gaze at him, and he helplessly changed his address: "Master, Master Huan....." After all, Huan Yuan was the son of a rebel; if they took him outside like this, what if he ran away?

Chu Yu laughed, "With you by my side, what do I have to worry?" Taking Huan Yuan to the poetry banquet was Rong Zhi's suggestion, drugging Huan Yuan was also Rong Zhi's suggestion, but Chu Yu decided with her own conscience, to adopt the first suggestion but disregard the second.

Harming someone else's body for her own desire was not a solution for Chu Yu, so she could only rely on her guard's close protection.

Yue Jiefei didn't say anything else.

Chapter 25: The New Ninja Turtle

To avoid too much attention, like last time, Chu Yu again left from the backdoor. The four walked out and came to the alley behind the Princess' Palace; this alley was very deserted, and usually, no one used it; but today, they heard a series of hoofsteps.

A person and a mount appeared at the mouth of the alley at the end. Along with echoing hoofsteps, the person already came up to them in just a moment's time, as if a racing wind.

The rider halted his steed and stopped. Only at this time could Chu Yu see his appearance clearly. Because he had been galloping, his garments were a little messy, and his hat slid down to his shoulder; but the first impression he gave wasn't an untidy one, instead a tall and confident feeling; his handsome features carried no emotion as he gazed down at the four from on his horse, his figure upright. To put it in modern day's words, he looked very cool.

"Sir prince consort¹." Liusang muttered, slowly letting go of Chu Yu's arm, which he had been hugging.

That was He Ji, the prince consort whom she hasn't met yet all these days? The supposed husband of this body?

Even though Chu Yu's standards had already been greatly brought up by Rong Zhi and the others at the palace after these days, and she didn't find it amazing or anything if she saw handsome men, Chu Yu still had to admit, that He Ji's appearance was one of the finest. He'd be able to become the Princess' husband just with that face.

He Ji rode back to the palace, and saw a person who he seemed to have never seen before standing not far from the door; beside that person was Yue Jiefei, Huan Yuan, and Liusang. He raised his brows slightly. Was this some new male concubine the princess brought back? Well, he's not all that attractive. But when He Ji looked more closely, that person seemed familiar; and after even closer observation.....

He Ji's expression changed slightly. He dismounted and came to before Chu Yu, and saluted her: "Greetings, Princess."

When she first saw He Ji, Chu Yu thought he would roll his eyes at her. After all, as the Princess of Shanyin's husband, he got so many green hats stacked on his head; any man wouldn't be able to stand this. Even if he couldn't divorce his wife, at least he'd put on an arrogant or disdainful attitude, and walk past pretending this wife didn't exist, like how Jiang Yan behaved.

But this prince consort He's reaction was greatly out of Chu Yu's expectations, making her suddenly not know how to respond.

He Ji looked up to see Chu Yu's lost gaze, and immediately showed a caring expression, coming up and holding Chu Yu's hand, asking worriedly at the same time, "Has the Princess' body not recovered yet? A few days ago I heard the Princess was not well; but I, as the prince consort, couldn't come visit the Princess due to business. Thinking about it today, I really am ashamed." As he said this, the corners of his eyes wetted, as if he really was moved.

When he held her hand, Chu Yu immediately came back to her senses, then praised in her heart: acting skills! What was acting skills? This was true acting skills. The acting skills of this prince consort, was definitely on the level of an oscar winner's! So detailed acting of demeanor, so moving recital of lines; if one didn't know what was really going on, from the perspective of some outsider, one would definitely think this was a couple that loved each other dearly.

Chu Yu would never believe that prince consort He didn't mind his wife keeping male concubines, or that he was magnanimous enough to forgive her; in fact, no man would be able to not mind this type of thing at all. She even believed that, if her identity wasn't a princess, she'd already be murdered ten thousand times by prince consort He, ten thousand times. But, there were still two male concubines standing right beside her, yet prince consort He could still speak so movingly.....

Slight chills enveloped her heart, and even though her hand was being held warmly by a handsome man, Chu Yu didn't feel warm or sweet at all. She could only exclaim to herself, able to tolerate what ordinary people couldn't tolerate, if such a person didn't possess great wisdom, he must have something he wanted and a great plot. From today on, she must be very careful of this person.

She smiled gently and pulled her hand out of He Ji's grip, replying, "I'm fine; if the prince consort has business to deal with, no need to think about me. I'm okay with having Liusang and Huan Yuan accompanying me."

He Ji hesitated for a second. Seeing that Chu Yu's expression was indifferent, he said some more caring words, then claimed to be in a hurry, handed his horse over to the guards, and walked into the Princess' Palace. Even though his garments were messy, with his elegant demeanor, he seemed to be one wearing neat formal attire.

After the doors behind her shut, Chu Yu let out a long breath. With his head lowered, Liusang once again hugged onto her arm, mumbling beneath his breath: "Princess..... Master, I don't like the prince consort."

Chu Yu smiled, finally couldn't resist reaching her idle hand forward to touch his head. The hairs under her hand were soft and meticulous as she asked: "Why do you not like him?"

"I don't know." Liusang shook his head, puzzled. He then habitually rubbed Chu Yu twice, "I don't know why, but I just don't like him." His eyes were clear and innocent, rippling and sparkling.

Chu Yu blanked for a second, then immediately understood: a child's heart was the most sensitive; he could feel the hate hidden underneath He Ji's disguised appearance, and instinctively turn it into his "not liking him".

Spontaneously laughing out loud, Chu Yu patted his tender cheeks. The soft and tender feeling was so good on her hand, that she finally couldn't resist pinching it: "It's okay, I don't like him either, so we can not like him together."

Hearing her say this, Liusang laughed very happily.

Chu Yu also smiled, but a trace of heavy worry couldn't help appearing at her brows.

Even though He Ji had a very handsome appearance, and his manner was elegant and graceful, making people unable to dislike him from any angle, with just one meeting, Chu Yu immediately raised his danger level in her heart to only under Rong Zhi's.

He Ji was the prince consort, the son from a prestigious family, a person with

an official position. He wasn't like the male concubines at the Princess' Palace, who didn't have backgrounds; such a person, didn't need to act according to the Princess' feelings at all. But he was so tolerant, even not hesitating to pretend to love the princess dearly. What did he want?

Only upsetting herself with this thinking, Chu Yu decided to put the matter down for now, and not disturb herself with it. But her thoughts immediately turned to another direction: this sir prince consort received so many free green hats from the princess, that he was naturally a big green turtle. But not only did he not explode, he was actually so tolerant, and could pretend that he really loved the princess; he was virtually superhuman. To show her respect, she decided that from now on, she would in her heart give him the honor title of [ninja turtle](#)².

Also to remind herself, that she must have guard against this prince consort.

So tolerant, he must have something he wanted.

1. Prince consort: a princess' husband. I know this isn't very accurate but I can't think of anything better... Do you guys think just "prince" will do? Please leave any suggestions in the comments if you have one, it'd be very appreciated!![↩](#)

2. Ninja turtle: Chinese translation is 忍者神龟(Ren Zhe Shen Gui); intended as a pun. 忍(Ren) by itself means tolerate/tolerant, 者(Zhe) means person, and 忍者(Ren Zhe) together means ninja(due to its pronunciation). 神(Shen) means god/superhuman, while 龟(Gui) is turtle. Hence the nickname :^)[↩](#)

Chapter 26: Flowing Water Yet Not A Poetry Banquet

They had just exited the alley behind the Princess' Palace and entered the streets when Chu Yu sensitively noticed, that under his loose garments, Huan Yuan's body was a little stiff; although he tried his best to hide it, Chu Yu could still tell that his movements weren't natural.

And his handsome features also couldn't help showing a guarded yet hopeful expression; he gazed at every single thing deeply, as if he could never look enough. If she had to make an analogy, Chu Yu would say he was like a creature that just landed on earth, wanting to explore the outer world, but instinctively cautious.

She suddenly remembered what Rong Zhi told her today: it had been two years since Huan Yuan stepped out of the Princess' Palace.

And before been picked by Princess and put in her harem, Huan Yuan didn't have much freedom either. As the descendant of rebels, he was put under house-arrest by the royal family, so he wasn't free at all; he was under surveillance almost all times, and every moment to him was like walking on ice, worrying if it would break. He rarely had the chance to walk on the streets like this.

The four picked streets with less people to walk, but even so, Huan Yuan's handsome appearance was still very attractive; it didn't take long for a young girl to run over blushing and throw a peach blossom at Huan Yuan.

Chu Yu could only sigh in her heart that she was so careless. She only remembered to modify her own appearance, but forgot that Huan Yuan's handsomeness was even more attractive than hers. They were fortunate that they didn't go through some bustling road; if they did, they'd probably be stoned to death by fruits and melons.

Huan Yuan subconsciously caught the branch of peach blossoms, his expression confused. Chu Yu tilted her head while glancing at him, laughing, "Why are you not happy? You've got admirers."

Shyness instantly flashed across Huan Yuan's fair and handsome features.

Since he was born, he had never walked on the streets so openly: from being under house-arrest to being forcefully insulted, all the difference was moving from one cage to another. He had never walked on roads like this, nor been admired by young girls.

Growing up in a confined environment, Huan Yuan wanted to break through his cage more than anyone. Now that the vast sky was right before his eyes, he almost had to use every bit of strength he had to suppress his impulse of running away. Because Huan Yuan knew he couldn't escape. Even though there was only a Yue Jiefei beside him, he had witnessed this person's martial skills before, and knew that there was no way he could defeat Yue Jiefei. If he made any reckless move, the sword at Yue Jiefei's waist would immediately and accurately be at his throat.

Gentle fragrance spread out from the peach blossom; Huan Yuan suddenly didn't know what to do. Although that girl's appearance was very ordinary, this was the first time in his life for this to happen.....

Before he had the time to think about it more, a past event flashed across Huan Yuan's mind like lightning, and his expression changed slightly; as if throwing away some big trouble, he quickly tossed the flower away.

He wasn't afraid if Chu Yu will punish him for accepting the flower, he was afraid Chu Yu will harm that girl.

That was a little more than a year ago. One of the Princess' elder female cousins, a very good friend of hers, thought Rong Zhi was handsome, so she joked with the Princess, asking for the Princess to give him to her. The Princess smiled and declined, and then Huan Yuan never saw that woman again. Under suspicion, he investigated, and found out that she died in an accident.

But who knew, if that accident was really an accident?

With her quick reflexes, Chu Yu caught the falling flower branch, then laughed: "That little girl gave you this flower, why did you throw it away? If you don't want it, I'll take it." This peach blossom was very beautiful, and the place broken off was very fresh; it was probably just picked not long ago.

Huan Yuan was dumbfounded, not knowing what she intended by saying these. But before he could think more, Chu Yu continued walking forward, and

Liusang dragged him on by his sleeve.

Pingding Mountain was a not-so-famous little mountain outside the city; this name wasn't even recorded down. Although the mountain wasn't tall, it had a subtle beauty. When they came to the foot of the mountain, Chu Yu noticed a clear stream running down along the cracks in the rocks.

Even though the path was built, the climb was still steep; fortunately, breezes blew through the tree lines frequently, making them feel cool and refreshed.

There were several splits in the path. The trees were very concentrated, and with one glance all that came into view was greenery. They couldn't see the way the path bent or crooked in the distance. When they started along one of the forks in the road, Chu Yu heard voices floating over from the other. All the greenery blocked the figures, but she could still hear the light-hearted voice that sounded faintly: "Brother Yizhi, come this way! Be careful!"

The other person seemed to have replied something, but because his voice was lower, Chu Yu couldn't perceive it clearly. And then the people who made the sounds went farther and farther away.

After a while, they arrived at the top of the mountain, which was a massive plain; this was probably where Pingding Mountain's¹ name originated. At the end of the plain was an octagonal pavilion built at the edge of the cliff, a clear spring of water streaming out through green and white mountain rocks beside it, flowing down a man-made aqueduct about a little more than a foot wide.

On the two sides of the winding stream, about every two meters, were one or two silk cushions; and beside each set of cushions, a small, low square-shaped table was placed, carrying pastries and dried meat for the guest to enjoy.

But Chu Yu had no time to pay attention to these, for she was currently in the mode of being astonished.

Many had already arrived at the top of the mountain, and have probably all come to attend the poetry banquet. What was astonishing wasn't that there were people here; what was astonishing was, these people were almost all handsome men, and when they walked, their long sleeves billowed in the air,

making their figures elegant and beautiful. Even if some may not have outstanding appearances, their demeanor and movements were still very graceful, making people naturally want to be friends with them.

How was this a poetry banquet with flowing water? This was obviously a gathering of handsome men!

Chu Yu became a little depressed. If she knew this was the situation, there was no way she'd cram so many ancient literature pieces and tire herself out! She'd just bring her face!

Different from the astonishment in Chu Yu's heart, Huan Yuan and Yue Jiefei both had on an expression of sudden realization. Both involuntarily glanced at Chu Yu, sighing in their hearts that no wonder the Princess recently seemed to have changed, they even thought she was preparing to head towards the elegant levels..... So this was why.

Now, it's pretty much a wolf falling into the middle of a flock of sheep.

Besides what Huan Yuan was thinking, Yue Jiefei began worrying about something else that might happen: there weren't just a few high-quality handsome men here. If the Princess had too many targets, how was he going to bind all these people and take them back?

1. Pingding Mountain: 平顶山, 平顶(Pingding) means flat top. [↩](#)

Chapter 27: A Gathering of Handsome Men

Pei Shu, who had invited Chu Yu here, was conversing with several handsome men when he noticed Chu Yu abruptly. He apologized to the people he was talking with and left them, walking over and smiling: "Brother Zichu really is trustworthy." Then his gaze landed on the other three people beside Chu Yu, and asked curiously: "Excuse me, but they are—"

Chu Yu picked up his protracted tone, and answered, "These two are my family. This is Yu Ziyuan, and this is Yu Liusang. Ziyuan's talent and learning are far better than mine, I thought he would be more fit to participate in the poetry banquet, so I brought them here." With an open and close of her lips, Chu Yu deftly changed Huan Yuan and Liusang's names. After introducing them, Chu Yu then pointed at Yue Jiefei, "This is my good friend, surname Yue. When he heard about the situation I got into last time, he specially accompanied me here."

Yue Jiefei also knew that him standing there was very out-of-place, so he nodded gently and excused himself, backing away into an inconspicuous corner. He would guard Chu Yu's safety from there.

After that, Pei Shu took Chu Yu on a walk around the mountain top, introducing those handsome men to her, and introducing Chu Yu to them at the same time. They only told their names, and no one spoke about their backgrounds.

Every time Pei Shu introduced a person, Chu Yu would smile and nod at him; her heart was calm and her expression was elegant, that no matter who Pei Shu introduced to her, she still held the same expression throughout, making Pei Shu think even higher of her.

Actually, the reason Chu Yu didn't have any reaction was mostly because just by hearing the names, she had no idea about these people's backgrounds. To her, these names were just abstract symbols that didn't contain any deeper level of meaning. But as Huan Yuan listened on aside, waves of emotion surged in his heart.

There were about twenty to thirty people here; judging from their last names

and their attitudes toward each other, and the information Huan Yuan knew, they were probably the successors to almost half of the most prominent families in the upper class of the Southern Dynasties. To put it in other words, if no big political upheaval occurred, these people will grow to become the next generation's power holders.

But Chu Yu didn't notice the emotions surging in Huan Yuan's heart at all. As she cast glances at Pei Shu from time to time, her attention was attracted by something else: she didn't know if it was her illusion or not, but she kept feeling that Pei Shu's appearance today was much more good-looking than three days ago. His skin had a fairer tone, and it seemed to be a lot smoother, almost like going up an entire level.

Although she told herself it was probably an illusion, Chu Yu still suspected more and more. If not for there was no plastic surgery in ancient times, she'd even think he went to pale his skin. Also, light fragrance floated off from Pei Shu time to time, making Chu Yu wonder if she'd met a second Mo Xiang? But just a few days ago when she met Pei Shu, he didn't have this type of fragrance?

Noticing Chu Yu's a little overly curious gaze, Pei Shu first blanked, then immediately understood, and smiled, "Brother Zichu, can you tell that I applied powder today?"

"Applied powder?" Faced with these completely unrelated person and word, Chu Yu thought she hallucinated, and almost involuntarily repeated it.

In the world views of her twenty-some years of life in her before life, the words applying powder, seemed to have been created just for women. She even remembered this one advertisement for this one makeup brand, where a woman with fair and tender skin pointed at her own face, and giggled on the screen, saying, "Take a guess, did I apply powder today?" At that time, Chu Yu was following a TV series, so she had to put up with this ad in the middle of the drama everyday, and therefore had a very deep impression of it. And today, with this one sentence of Pei Shu's, she recalled this memory of hers from years ago.

"Yes." Pei Shu's expression was a little proud, as he pointed at his own face, "I applied this peach blossom powder I specially bought from Pleasing Orchid Workshop. This type of powder is very fine; applying it is not much different from

not applying any powder, and it doesn't fall easily either. See for yourself!"

Today was a special day, so of course he was going to seriously dress up.

But Chu Yu's mind was still stuck in her astonishment: this Pei Shu looked like a normal human being from every angle, but why did he have this depressing habit? And the people around him, hearing him say these, seemed not surprised at all, as if doing so was as normal as could be.

Suddenly thinking of a possibility, Chu Yu glanced around herself, then abruptly turned back at Pei Shu, "Please don't tell me that these people all have powder on?" Once she thought about how she could be in the middle of a bunch of men that applies powder, Chu Yu couldn't help feeling chills run down her spine.

"Not really." Pei Shu's words relaxed Chu Yu's tensed nerves, and she told herself, good. But his next words made her depressed again: "About half and half."

Seeing that Chu Yu seemed to be very uneducated and surprised by the current fashion trends, Pei Shu very good-heartedly taught her about them, helping Chu Yu learn what was popular at the time. At this time period, men applying powder was fashionable, and as normal as putting on clothes. Of course there are also those who were born with good skin or liked to be close to nature; those people wouldn't do so.

If she were to draft a slogan for the powder squad's fashion, it would probably be: More fair! More tender! More brilliant!

Chu Yu sighed in her heart, telling herself that at least there were some relatively more normal people here, or else she'd really want to run away immediately.

So pitiful.

Chu Yu looked at Pei Shu with pity: such a handsome man (a little stretch but kinda), why was his aesthetics distorted to such an extent?

So pitiful.

Looking at Chu Yu, Pei Shu also thought to himself, not even knowing what applying powder was, just how strictly was this kid controlled or even confined by his family?

Most of those that came to attend this poetry banquet seemed very good at making conversation. They grouped together in severals and discussed life and philosophy, the skies and the earth and reason; the ambience was very enthusiastic. Pei Shu led Chu Yu around, talking the whole way. When they passed by the pavilion at the edge of the cliff, Pei Shu excused himself: "Please wait for a moment, while I touch-up my powder." As he said this, he very normally fished out a powder box from his sleeve, and used a small piece of soft flannel to dab it onto his face.

Chills ran down Chu Yu's spine again. But seeing Pei Shu's completely natural expression, she couldn't make it too obvious either, so persuaded herself that from today on she should just see him as a sister. But after all, this scene has some impact on her, so she simply pretended to glance around and turned her head away. And then she saw a youth dressed in blue garments sitting in the pavilion.

A moment ago, when she was in a distance, several conversing handsome men stood between this youth and Chu Yu, so Chu Yu only noticed him now.

A Chinese zither was placed on the table before the youth; his two hands rested in his wide sleeves as he gazed down at the strings on the zither, while his handsome features were tense, as if covered in a layer of icy frost. But his downwardly gazing irises made him seem a little sad.

There seemed to be a layer of deliberately separating air surrounding him, as if things going on around him had nothing to do with him. He didn't want to go pay attention to others, and didn't wish for others to come notice him either. Chu Yu was just about to ask Pei Shu, who had just finished his touch-up, who this was, when she suddenly realized that there was some commotion going on among the people around her. Many took several steps toward a same direction.

What happened? With a curious heart, Chu Yu also gazed over.

Chapter 28: The Wang Family Had Yizhi

Chu Yu moved her gaze, and out of the corner of her eye saw that Pei Shu was almost jogging in that direction, reaching the crowd very quickly. He raised his voice and spoke to the three walking up from the mountain path: "Finally, you are here."

Three people strolled up slowly from the mountain path, one in the front, two following behind. The person in the front seemed to be old friends with Pei Shu, grinning and replying, "Apologies apologies, we enjoyed the mountain scenery so much, that we were delayed a little."

Hearing this, Chu Yu almost laughed out loud: enjoyed the mountain scenery so much? Although this little mountain was beautiful, there was nothing spectacular; rather, there were a lot of complicated forks on the way up the mountain. If you ask her, these three probably got lost.

Don't know if Pei Shu really believed him, or he was just covering up for him, but he laughed as he patted that person's back, then turned to the two behind him, and bowed deeply: "Brother Yizhi, brother Yinzhi, we are so honored to have you two here."

Chu Yu watched on indifferently. Judging by Pei Shu's attitude, the two that just arrived seemed to be some very prominent figures. She stood where she was and squinted slightly, and only then did she see the two's appearances clearly. Although at first she was very indifferent, after seeing the two people clearly, she still couldn't help praising in her heart: what figures!

Although Chu Yu thought this was a gathering of handsome men, the moment these two appeared, they immediately made all the handsome men surrounding them seem plain. Especially the one on the left, who looked to be about twenty-six or twenty-seven; and different from others, who wore bobs or even elaborate hair caps, his hair was only loosely tied behind his head, the corners of his slender eyes slanted upward, while a casual and leisure smile faintly graced his lips.

If only comparing their faces, the most that could be said about this man was

that he tied with the others present; but when he stood there, he had this disposition that made people unable to move their gazes. He was obviously standing still, but Chu Yu had this illusion that he was like casually flowing water — even if she reached out her hand to grab him, she still wouldn't be able to hold on to him.

The young man on the right looked to be about the same age, but was distinctly different from the person beside him. The edges of his chin seemed slightly arrogant, and his presence, seemed like dangerous mountain ranges, towering and overbearing.

The two's dispositions were so contrasting, but complemented each other, too. When they stood together, it actually formed an odd ambience, strong enough to make people hold their breaths.

Taking a look at everyone present, Chu Yu glanced at everyone around herself, and realized that she actually couldn't find anyone that could match these two people. No, there was actually two; one was the youth clad in blue in the pavilion — even with the commotion Wang and Xie's arrival created, he still didn't seem to notice at all, still like frozen ice, his entire body sending off an essence that warded strangers off. And the other person, was right by her side.

Huan Yuan's ancient elegance and gracefulness had its own style. Although it may not be said to suppress these two people, they were comparable.

Naturally, neither Chu Yu nor Huan Yuan had those boring thoughts of competing about it. But Chu Yu was very curious: just who between these two was that Master Thousand-Gold Pei Shu was talking about the other day?

Pei Shu cleared his throat, then solemnly began introducing. The first to be introduced, was the person Chu Yu noticed: "This, is Wang Yizhi. I'm sure everyone knows about him."

"Wang Yizhi?" Someone asked in the crowd, "Which Wang Yizhi?"

Pei Shu glanced at that person with a little pride and disdain in his eyes, and replied, "How many Wang Yizhis are there in the world? Obviously the Wang Yizhi from the Wang family of Langya."

The moment Pei Shu finished his words, many in the crowd immediately

started exclaiming. A moment ago they only thought highly of the two's dispositions, but now some already showed admiration. Some even couldn't resist going up and greeting them, and the most zealous ones even asked Wang Yizhi to write something on their garments.

When Chu Yu heard it, she was also surprised. Although she never did well in history class, she still knew some about the Wang family of Langya.

Not because of anything else, just because this Wang family was really too famous, too prominent, too honored.

Taking the entire history of China into picture, there was almost no other family that could parallel the Wang family of Langya. This family was once so so flourishing and prosperous, continuously receiving titles and producing successive scholars one after another. Throughout the course of history and time, throughout all the dynastic changes over hundreds of years, the Wang family stayed standing firm, wealthy, famous, prominent, and honored. Over multiple hundreds of years, the number of governmental officials that came out of the Wang family was always counted with hundred as the base unit, and they produced more than ninety prime ministers. Such glorious splendor, such prominent history, no family could ever match.

There was this one line in Tang poetry: "The swallows that once lived in front of the Wang and Xie families, have now flew into the homes of ordinary people." The Wang mentioned in it, was talking about the Wang family of Langya.

Completely unexaggerated, the Wang family was the best nobility, the best clan.

At this moment, Chu Yu once again truly experienced that she had really traveled through time. She could use her own eyes, to see for herself the legend of the Wang family of Langya.

Chu Yu knew the Wang family. But what she didn't know was, this Wang Yizhi, even within the Wang family, was a legendary figure. Nobody knew what strength or skill he had, but everyone knew that the current head of the Wang family was his uncle, and that this uncle planned to skip around his own son, and let Wang Yizhi inherit the position and power of the leader of the Wang family. Facing such importance and attention, Wang Yizhi instead rejected with a smile,

and gave most of his life to the mountains and waters; he became a famous freedom-lover.

But even though he was uninhibited, he was still a very famous freedom-lover. Until now, his uncle still hadn't given up on the thought of letting him inherit the family property, sending people to try to persuade him every now and then. Every time someone was sent to persuade him, Wang Yizhi's name would grow in fame.

Next, the identity of the person that stood beside Wang Yizhi was also announced by Pei Shu. His name was Xie Yinzhi, and just by hearing this surname, with no need for anyone to remind her, Chu Yu knew that this person with Xie as his surname, eight out of ten chances must be from that Xie family in "in front of the Wang and Xie families". This was a family often mentioned alongside the Wang family, and although it wasn't as famous or prominent as the Wang family, it was still a top level nobility.

After Wang Yizhi and Xie Yinzhi arrived, everyone sat down on the two sides of the stream. Chu Yu understood perfectly: seems like the two Masters Wang and Xie were the spotlight of this gathering of handsome men; once these two came, there weren't many things left for the others. Her being here was just to add to the numbers too.

Then, Chu Yu watched as Pei Shu asked someone to take out paper and brush pens. She was very astonished, and only then did she finally remember, that this was that whatever flowing water poetry banquet; the appearances of the handsome men before took too much of the spotlight, and made her almost forget the real topic.

Chu Yu, with Liusang and Huan Yuan, found an empty seat that had relatively few people sitting around, and sat down beside the flowing water. Next to the silk cushions, on the short tables, were delicate-looking desserts. Chu Yu randomly picked one up and sent it into her mouth, and a soft sweetness melted at the tip of her tongue. But before she could swallow it, the corner of her eye caught the Wang Yizhi, who had caused the commotion a moment ago, slowly coming to a place not far from her, and sitting down leisurely.

Although he sat nearby, Wang Yizhi didn't pay any special attention to Chu Yu,

and the poetry banquet began very soon. This supposed poetry banquet with music, flowing water, and a feast, was really only the cultured version of “hot potato”. When the zither begins playing, they put a filled wine cup into the flowing water and let it just flow with the stream; when the music stops, whoever the wine cup was floating in front of, that person would have to drink the water and compose a poem.

The youth in blue garments sitting in the pavilion, whom Chu Yu had noticed before, now finally moved. He slowly lifted his hands up, and feeling the strings of the zither, started playing.

The wine cup flowed down with the water. Chu Yu prayed in her heart like chanting spells: don't stop in front of me, don't stop in front of me.

She really didn't have that poetry talent!

But don't know if it was Chu Yu's crow mouth, or if fate specially wanted to go against her, when the music stopped, the wine cup was right in the swirl in front of Chu Yu, spinning in slow circles.

With everyone watching and unable to play it off, Chu Yu laughed bitterly and picked up the wine cup.

Chapter 29: Exquisite Thinking

Plagiarize? Talk nonsense? Pretend to faint?

At that instant, three thoughts flashed across Chu Yu's mind at the same time.

Plagiarism; this was the easiest, fastest, and most convenient way. It was still more than a thousand years ago, before the Tang Dynasty, so the time when poetry flourished wasn't here yet. All the Tang poems, as long as she remembered them, she could "borrow" and use; no one would at this time jump out and hold her responsible for copyright issues.

When Chu Yu was cramming poetry, she had had this thought too, so she carefully filtered through the poems in her memory: she kicked out the ones that used allusions, kicked out the ones that didn't fit with this time period's trends and events, leaving only seven or eight left. That's enough for her to use though.

But when the time really came, she had some psychological barriers to actually doing this.

Because the poems that Chu Yu remembered, she liked most of them a lot, so she also respected the poets themselves; just taking away the crystallization of their talents like this made her feel guilty.

The second way was to talk nonsense, which is basically Chu Yu making up some random lines of poetry herself. This way was even more ridiculous. Not to mention that she couldn't meet the standards for poetic flow and word choice, just thinking about those flats and rhymings made her head feel like a pot of glue.

The third way was even more shameless than the first two. It was her just dropping to the ground and lying there, pretending that she got sick, and that she had a horrible headache. That would help her get out of the situation, but not to think about whether this would lose too much of her face or not, if she really did so, she'd probably be immediately sent down the mountain.

Her expression solemn, Chu Yu held the wine cup steadily, still battling in her heart. Suddenly, she felt the sleeve of her not raised hand being tugged, and

turned to see Liusang. Liusang had his head down, and reminded her in a soft voice: “Prin.....” He had just started when he remembered Chu Yu’s introduction of them a moment ago, and hurriedly changed his words: “Cousin Zichu, everyone is waiting for you.”

One of his hand tugging on Chu Yu’s sleeve, Liusang’s other hand nimbly snuck into her sleeve, his fingertip slowly drawing on the back of Chu Yu’s hand. Carefully feeling it, Chu Yu recognized that it was the word “zhi”.

Zhi? Rong Zhi?

Thinking about Rong Zhi, Chu Yu abruptly remembered Rong Zhi’s suggestion — Huan Yuan. She actually almost forgot about this person!

So then her fourth path was presented before her: cheat.

From some degree, this fourth way wasn’t any less shameless than the first three, but at this moment, to Chu Yu, it did seem like a very good solution to her problem.

Chu Yu smiled, and raised the cup towards Pei Shu’s direction, “I can’t think up a poem out of the top of my head right now. Can I let my cousin, Yu Ziyuan, accept this challenge on my behalf?”

Before Pei Shu could reply, Chu Yu heard an amused voice sound beside her, “Of course, but since he’s accepting it on your behalf, let’s see to two poems composed and two cups of wine drank.”

Turning her head to the sound, Chu Yu saw that it was Wang Yizhi speaking. He was helping himself with a flagon in his hand, gazing at Chu Yu with a casual smile.

Since Wang Yizhi already said so, Pei Shu couldn’t really raise any objections, so he nodded, “That’s good.”

Chu Yu frowned slightly, then quickly laughed, “I’ll let my cousin do the composing poetry part, and I’ll take the drinking part.” Not that she was stingy, but that she was afraid of Huan Yuan getting drunk and saying something he shouldn’t say.

Hearing this, Huan Yuan’s expression changed slightly, but just as he was

about to say something, Chy Yu leaned towards him, and a very soft voice rang beside his ears: “This is poetry composed for you yourself.”

The voice was so soft it seemed like a thread on the verge of breaking, but when Huan Yuan heard it, his fingers couldn't help trembling slightly. Chu Yu saying this was also instructed by Rong Zhi right before they left; he had expected long ago that Huan Yuan might refuse, therefore teaching her such a line. He laughed that if she said this sentence, Huan Yuan's poems will probably come out quickly.

All Chu Yu did was follow instructions, but waves surged in Huan Yuan's heart. He remembered that when he was brought into the Princess' Palace two years ago, that arrogant woman, said to him in an almost teasing disdainful tone, that he should “compose some poetry to amuse her”.

Naturally he refused. And from then on for a full two years, he never ever wrote even half a sentence of poetry or literature again.

But at this time, Chu Yu said this to him.

Composed for he himself?

What joke is this?

Although mocking in his heart, Huan Yuan's emotions couldn't be calmed so quickly. Today's momentary freedom had already shook his determination, and the suppression of two years had already drove him to some kind of extreme. Chu Yu had just touched it slightly, and everything seemed to rush out like a dam bursting.

Strike when the iron is hot. Seeing that he seemed to be wavering, Chu Yu smiled and let people bring Huan Yuan paper, brush pen, and a table, setting everything right before him.

Huan Yuan's hand involuntarily reached out. He had just held the brush pen in his hand when he felt like rocks exploding and springs surging, the poetic lines in his heart flowing out unstoppably like a smooth, continuous piece of silk.

Unable to hold it back anymore.

While Huan Yuan wrote down lines and lines of poetry, Yue Jiefei, standing in a

corner, was already so bored he almost began squatting on the ground and counting ants: they have already been here for so long, and nothing happened; the Princess really started seriously participating in this whatever poetry banquet..... Has she really changed?

According to the Princess' past habits, at this time, she would already have been bringing one or two or three or even more handsome men back.

He was just an uneducated layman that had no taste of elegant levels, and this scene before him made him sulk real bad. He was all but scratching the ground.....

Yue Jiefei moaned gently in his heart: Princess, if you see whoever you like, just tell me, no matter who that person is, I'll bind him and take him back for you.

Rong Zhi entered the East Wing, and headed straight towards the court where the Princess' bedroom was situated.

The entire way, he was halted by no one. Some even asked him if he needed help, but were all declined by Rong Zhi with a smile.

Entering Chu Yu's bedroom, he turned and closed the door, then bolted it. Now, there won't be any maids coming to clean up the room coming in.

Scanning the room, Rong Zhi's gaze was profound and unpredictable. A gentle smile slipped onto the corner of his lips.

After searching for a while, Rong Zhi came to Chu Yu's bed. He was just about to lean down and lift up the quilts, when the fingertips of his hand placed on the edge of the bed touched some rugged and rough carvings.

He raised his brows and tilted his head to see that several "zheng"s were carved into the edge of the bed, with another one that only had three strokes carved, incomplete.

After about fifteen minutes, Rong Zhi left with empty hands.

Chapter 30: Able to Come Up with a Thousand Lines on a War Horse About to Go Off to Battle

Huan Yuan finished composing two poems in a very short time. Chu Yu read them over, thought it was pretty good, but wasn't certain, so she gave it to a servant boy beside her to hand it to Pei Shu. Pei Shu read it out loud, and everyone began praising; now Chu Yu believed that this poetry really was pretty good.

When the second melody sounded, the wine cup started flowing with the water again. Chu Yu began chanting in her heart again, but when the music stopped again, that wine cup again came to right before her.

Not one inch over, not one inch less.

Chu Yu subconsciously glanced at the youth in blue garments that was playing the zither, almost blurting out to ask him if he did that on purpose; but that youth was still gazing at the Chinese zither, his handsome features sealed by unapproachable frost, making it unable for others to guess his true thoughts.

Silently glancing at the youth clad in blue again, Chu Yu raised her cup and smiled at Pei Shu, then lifted her head and gulped it all down while paper, brush pen, and table were once again brought to before Huan Yuan.

Chu Yu smiled and patted Huan Yuan's shoulder: "Show them what you got." Now, she could only rest her hopes on Rong Zhi didn't exaggerate, that Huan Yuan really had the poetic talent to come up with a thousand lines even if on a war horse about to go off to battle.

At the same time, she was also suspecting in her heart: two times when the music stopped, the wine cup both stopped before her. Was it by coincidence or on purpose? If the latter, why did the youth in blue do so?

Mountain peaks, flowing springs, listening to zither playing, pouring wine, reading poetry; this was supposed to be a very elegant event, but it was an utmost torture to Yue Jiefei. Listening to the distant zither music and then listening to the gorgeous poems, he silently tore two strips of cloth from his

undergarment¹ and rolled them into little clumps, stuffing them into his ears.

Two pieces of poetry were produced again like homework on an assembly line; when Chu Yu handed the paper with the poems to Pei Shu, his gaze at Huan Yuan was already a little like looking at a monster.

The third melody sounded, the wine cup began flowing down the stream again. This time, Chu Yu didn't chant in her heart, just turning her head to gaze fixedly at the youth in blue, a faint smile hanging on her lips.

She was going to see, if this time there will be another "coincidence".

Rong Zhi strolled out of the East Wing, seeming to be smiling but seeming to not be smiling too. At this time, Mo Xiang happened to be walking out from the West Wing, and seeing his smile, walked up after a slight hesitation.

Rong Zhi nodded slightly at him, then smiled: "Play a game of go² with me." Almost everyone knew that besides reading, Rong Zhi's other hobby was playing go, and he occasionally asked the other male concubines at the palace to play with him.

The two came to Snow Shower Garden. Among the green bamboos and their shades, on the bluestone platform, was a go board; on it black and white go pieces formed a scattered arrangement.

This was a half-finished game.

This was not the first time Mo Xiang played go with Rong Zhi, so he very naturally went up and sat down on one side, picking up a white go piece from the go piece box and placing it down on the board, asking softly: "Master, you went to the East Wing?"

Rong Zhi followed and placed down a black go piece, smiling faintly, "I went to verify something. Don't worry about it, I know my limits."

Hearing him say this, Mo Xiang also smiled: "I guess I worry too much. Master has always thought everything out thoroughly before taking action, so there won't be any danger." He placed down another piece, then lifted his head, as if remembering something, "Master, I heard that the Princess took Huan Yuan out

today.”

Rong Zhi replied, “Yes, I was the one that persuaded the Princess to do so.”

“Why?” Mo Xiang couldn’t resist frowning, “I still don’t know, why Master values Huan Yuan so much. He’s just a scholar with relatively more talent; what big thing can he do?”

Rong Zhi was picking up a black piece, but hearing Mo Xiang ask this, raised his head, and said slowly, “Do you know, who Huan Yuan is?”

Mo Xiang answered honestly all he knew: “I’ve heard a little about him. Huan Yuan seems to be the descendant of the rebellious Huan family.”

“Rebellious?” Rong Zhi tilted his head and thought about it, then smiled, “True, to the dynasty of the Liu family, the Huan family are rebels. But if talking about rebels, the Southern Dynasties’ Gaozu³, Liu Yu, is also one. In such a warring period, loyalty is as weak as a piece of paper; Ji Fa destroyed the Shang Dynasty and founded the Zhou Dynasty, Liu Bang rebelled against the Qin Dynasty and established the Han Dynasty, Sima usurped the Wei and founded the Jin Dynasty; almost every person that established an empire, no matter from which generation, had to overthrow the dynasty of the previous generation. So who isn’t a rebel?”

“Those who succeed become kings; those who fail become the bandits. If the one who failed was Liu Yu, then today it would be the people from the Huan family ruling the world, while the people from the Liu family would all be slaughtered.” Although his tone was gentle, he had no respect to the founding emperor, even indifferently addressing the founding emperor of the Southern Dynasties by his name.

Mo Xiang wasn’t disturbed by this at all. He didn’t even show any astonished expression, just silently listening to what Rong Zhi had to say.

Rong Zhi smiled, then put down another go piece: “The reason why I spoke so much today, is because I hope that you won’t place your insight on only one family and one surname. Observe the affairs of the world with an eye of the world, and you will understand a lot more clearly.”

“Among the top nobles that held the power of the Eastern Jin Dynasty, only

the Huan family and the Xie family rose to prominence by its own working. But the rise of the Xie family was over the course of several generations working hard, while the Huan family depended on only one person: the ancestor of Huan Yuan, Huan Wen. With only the strength of himself, within the short period of a little more than ten years, he developed a top-notch nobility family. Huan Wen was a stunning hero; he wasn't able to establish a lasting legacy only because he died early from disease. But his son, Huan Xuan, was an idiot whose aspirations and abilities didn't match, and so became the stepping stone for Liu Yu's rise to power."

"The legend of the Huan family should have ended here. But when I saw Huan Yuan, I knew, the last hope of the Huan family still remained on him." After pausing for a while, Rong Zhi continued, "I heard, the reason why the Princess knew Huan Yuan existed, was because the others of the the Huan family found a way to send over a message; at that time, the Princess' father was still the emperor, and he was about to murder the last of the Huan family, and kill the last bloodline. They had no other choice but to make Huan Yuan seen by the Princess, so that he can enter the Princess' Palace and keep his life." Huan Yuan's life was preserved like this. Besides him, every single one of the people of the Huan family died.

This was the first time Mo Xiang heard about this. He couldn't help being surprised: "So Huan Yuan doesn't know this?"

Rong Zhi smiled gently, "Of course he doesn't know. I wouldn't have let him know at that time either."

"And why is that?"

"You can't tell how much Huan Yuan can achieve because his talent has been limited. He has been under house arrest since young, and although he was wronged and controlled, he has never seen any of the true complexity of humans and worldly affairs, and all the things that happen in the world. All he knows came from books or his family, who were also under house arrest. But look at the revolting plan he conspired last time. Does it seem like one thought up by someone who had completely no experience?"

If, geniuses really existed in this world, then it must be Huan Yuan. Without

any social experience, without having gone through any conspiracy or intrigue, but able to plan such a detailed and comprehensive plot, with ingenious links connecting all the parts; although it still had loopholes in his eyes, it was just because he was more experienced than Huan Yuan.

Maybe the born-with political talent of the ancestor of the Huan family, Huan Wen, has been re-aroused in the blood of this generation; even though growing up under an environment as oppressed as that, its brilliance still unremovable.

- 1. Undergarment: no not underwear or whatever some of you might be thinking... in ancient china basically another set of clothes but probably with different material and just one color all over, usually white (i think, at least from watching Chinese tv shows and stuff). The white ones in 中衣 (search on google if ur curious) basically.↵
- 2. Go: ancient board game. Well, not really “board” game since the “board” is really a piece of cloth, but I’ll call the “board” go board just b/c that’s easier. Although the chinese, 棋, can be referring to any of a bunch of different chess-like board games, in this case it is go. Also, it usually means go in the context of ancient china, cuz that’s most all they had.↵
- 3. Gaozu: a title for this specific emperor. Though some other emperors in history have used the same title↵

Chapter 31: Thou Was Originally an Excellent Person

At this time, even the others also felt that things were weird. No matter how coincidental things might be, this can almost never happen. Three times in a row, when the music stopped, the wine cup flowed to before the same person.

Since when were there coincidences like this?!

Pei Shu involuntarily looked towards the youth clad in blue, wanting to speak, but stopping: "Brother Xiao....."

The youth only continued to gaze at the zither strings, not looking at anything else, nor noticing Pei Shu.

Chu Yu suddenly laughed. She reached out and picked up the wine cup from the cold stream, then turned towards the youth in blue and smiled: "How coincidental." Then lifted her head and swallowed down the wine.

To others, Chu Yu seemed to want to peacefully conclude this, and not look into it more. But Chu Yu knew herself, that she had a deeper meaning in her words.

She was probing.

These words, were said for that youth in blue to hear.

Although Chu Yu kind of knew who the Princess of Shanyin was, or what important things she's done, this was only the Princess of Shanyin in history. What about the Princess of Shanyin as a person? What kind of person was she? How were her relatives like? What has she been through? Was her love for handsome men born-with or did it develop later in life? Did she have someone she loved deeply or cared for deeply? What did she like and what did she hate? And, who has she met before, who did she know, or..... who knew her.

Although Chu Yu had tried to fish out information from You Lan, that was only You Lan's view of others, and regarding herself, she avoided all questions after asking about her identity, because she didn't want to make more people suspicious. Therefore, even though she has been here for so many days already, and has inherited this identity, she still knew almost nothing about the past of

this identity she was using.

She knew the Princess of Shanyin as a historical figure, but didn't know Liu Chuyu as a live person.

Or, she was actually subconsciously avoiding this question. If she knew too much, the Princess of Shanyin will really become alive in her mind, and she will feel uncomfortable taking over this body.

The ethereal feeling of the telling of words and the details in real life, at this time, finally had a merging point even though they were so different.

Although she didn't know why the youth in blue would make things difficult for her, she guessed that this youth probably knew the Princess of Shanyin, so he did this on purpose.

This guess must be at least seven or eight out of ten correct.

So Chu Yu used words to further probe the situation.

After she spoke, while drinking the wine, Chu Yu didn't forget to divert her attention to observe the reaction of the youth in blue. Not seeing him change his expression, she couldn't help but be a little disappointed; but when she remembered prince consort He's astonishing acting skills, she relaxed again.

No one brought up a table or paper or brush pens, because those put in front of Huan Yuan from last time weren't removed. The servant boy serving them took a little break for himself.

This time, not needing for Chu Yu to open her mouth, Huan Yuan's hand voluntarily reached toward the brush pen and ink.

He had been suppressed for too long, he needed this chance to vent out everything. The depression from these two years, the tolerance of these two years, had oppressed his heart and soul to an extreme; as an unfree bird in a cage, his only way to vent out, was this paper and pen before him.

Two more poems were sent up. Now, not just Pei Shu, but the gazes of almost everyone present were focused on Huan Yuan.

When the fourth melody sounded, many directed their gazes towards Chu Yu; and that youth in blue didn't disappoint them. When the wine cup flowed to

before Chu Yu, the music stopped, and Chu Yu raised the wine cup with a smile, toasted it to the youth in blue, and drank it all down.

Martially, she had her guard Yue Jiefei; scholarly, she could cheat with Huan Yuan; even if that youth really had some grudge against the Princess of Shanyin, she still had nothing to fear. If soldiers come, she'll block with generals; if floods come, she'll fill it with soil¹. She was going to see what he was really up to.

“The preciousness of Huan Yuan is due to him not having been carved intentionally to become something. Look at him now; he’s maybe just a rock with a relatively more attractive shape. But really, under this surface, the true beautiful jade is buried.” It was very quiet among the bamboos, quiet enough that only the sound of wind blowing across the leaves and Rong Zhi speaking could be heard, “But this piece of beautiful jade isn’t so easy to acquire. It is scholarly because so few people have touched it; but because of this, plus his identity as the descendant of the Huan family, he has arrogance in his bones, and is impossible to submit to anyone easily.”

Mo Xiang looked at the situation on the go board. His white go pieces were already very precarious, and the originally balanced situation was now greatly leaning towards one side.

“I am going to suppress Huan Yuan’s character.” Rong Zhi gazed at the two colors of go pieces, and after carefully considering his next steps, continued, “He hasn’t been wronged enough yet. I will slowly grind off all his arrogance from being a descendant of the Huan family, and make him forget the glories of his ancestors. I have lots of time to do so. And then, at the right time, when everyone has betrayed and forsook him, I will reach out a helping hand.” He needed to make Huan Yuan think that everyone had deserted him, including his family.

The drowning person, when flooded by despair, even if it’s just a piece of straw, they will still grab onto it and never let go.

He smiled gently, his smile a little delighted, and his slender fingers picked up a smooth black go piece and placed it at the eye of the chess pattern: “And then, he will be mine.”

That moment will definitely be very delightful.

Two, four, six, eight, ten.....

When Huan Yuan wrote down his twentieth poem, the people were looking at him like he was some unearthly being.

Some had been suspicious that Huan Yuan wrote many poems long ago and saved them, so demanded for him to compose poetry then and there on given topics. So Huan Yuan did, taking up the brush pen right after listening to the topic, not even leaving the time for seven steps in between².

But even though he was mass producing poetry like this, none of them were dry or boring, nor even being similar; the language was even more wonderful and gracious, making people truly admire. Except the youth in blue, Wang Yizhi, Xie Yinzhi, and Chu Yu, who could hold themselves relatively more calm, everyone else's emotions were boiling with enthusiasm and idolatry.

This was not one or two poems, but continuously composing dozens of poems; as scholars, many present have been through the time when they couldn't think of a next line, when they thought so hard but still couldn't find the right words. Since when have they seen such literary talent, pouring out like a waterfall?

Since ancient times, people had said that there has never been a number one in literary studies, nor has there ever been a number two in martial arts. But this first half of the sentence was only true when two people were put under similar conditions. Huan Yuan had been suppressed for two years, and now everything was pouring out, so everyone else was dull under his comparison, and had to completely acknowledge Huan Yuan's superior talent over them.

Compared to Huan Yuan's glorious time, Chu Yu was legitly forgotten. Now her only value was to drink the wine.

Several cups were bearable, but too much still wouldn't do. And although the specially made wine cup couldn't hold too much liquid, after many cups, it was still a significant amount. After drinking the tenth cup, although Chu Yu wasn't drunk yet, she already started intentionally controlling her alcohol intake: when she picked up the wine cup from the water, she kept seemingly unintentionally

flick her wrist, pouring out the majority of the wine, and later even pouring the whole cup into the stream.

But at this time no one cared whether she drank the wine or not anymore, because almost everyone was waiting for Huan Yuan's next poem with a nearly crazy attitude.

Twenty, twenty-two, twenty-four, twenty-six..... Each word was brilliant, each line was elaborate.

When they reached the thirtieth poem, even the youth in blue couldn't resist looking up and glancing at Huan Yuan.

At this poetry banquet that Chu Yu decided to attend in the spur of a moment, the person that got the center of attention was not the uninhibited Wang Yizhi, not the calm and profound Xie Yinzhi, not the Master Thousand-Gold that Chu Yu didn't even know whether he came or not or who he was, but Huan Yuan, the person used for cheating, the person originally only seen as a tag-along of Chu Yu.

The wine cup was placed into the flowing water again for the sixteenth time, but the music did not sound. The youth in blue picked up his zither and slowly walked out the pavilion, then came to before Huan Yuan; glancing at him, he said icily: "Thou was originally an excellent person."

And then left without looking back, not pausing no matter how Pei Shu called him.

1. If soldiers come, she'll block with generals; if floods come, she'll fill it with soil: 兵来将挡, 水来土淹. Chinese idiom meaning everything will resolve itself at its moment.↩

2. The time for seven steps: b/c in Chinese history there was a superbly famous poem composed in seven steps; this person who came into power forced his brother to compose a poem within seven steps or else he'd have him killed□↩

Chapter 32: Master Thousand-Gold Xiao

[Next Chapter]

Thou was originally an excellent person. Although the youth didn't say the four words that followed, Chu Yu could complete the idiom without even using her brain cells: why follow the thief.

She could be absolutely sure now.

The youth in blue knew the Princess of Shanyin, or, he had had some unpleasant experience with her.

Watching the youth's figure, Chu Yu thought a little evilly: as for what unpleasant experience he could have..... with the Princess of Shanyin, what else could it be?

After failing to call back the youth in blue after multiple attempts, Pei Shu walked to Chu Yu with a conflicted expression and said, "Brother Zichu, although brother Xiao isn't all that social, he is definitely not unreasonable. Have you offended him before?"

Chu Yu shrugged, and laughed indifferently: "Who knows? Maybe not, maybe yes, but I don't remember."

Unable to acquire any clues from Chu Yu, Pei Shu went and apologized to the others. Without the person playing the zither, the poetry banquet lost half of its gracefulness. The others all came to Huan Yuan, and after some small talk, left one by one.

Even though that youth in blue had seemed to be situated in a completely separated space, his influence on the poetry banquet was far greater than Chu Yu expected. Just like these people before her; they all admired Huan Yuan's literary talent deeply, but seemed to have some misgivings and weren't willing to converse deeply; once getting to know each other a little, they all bid farewell and left.

One by one, everyone left. The lively mountain top suddenly became empty, with only several people still remaining. Wang Yizhi stood up slowly, then walked

up to Huan Yuan slowly; after glancing him up and down carefully, he smiled, then turned to Chu Yu and chuckled: "Interesting."

Chu Yu raised her brows and replied: "What do you mean?"

Wang Yizhi laughed, "You ask me, but who should I ask?" He suddenly turned around, and walked down the mountain in big strides.

The last that left was Pei Shu. Gazing at Chu Yu, he said after a long hesitation: "Brother Zichu, let me also bid farewell."

Chu Yu smiled faintly, "Please do whatever is convenient for you." Seeing that Pei Shu was leaving, she remembered something, and asked: "Last time you mentioned a Master Thousand-Gold; why have I not seen him? Which one was him?"

Pei Shu's eyes widened, and he sighed after a slight pause: "Now I believe that you really don't remember. For that brother Xiao who just left because of you, he is Master Thousand-Gold, Xiao Bie." Sighing, he said goodbye and left.

Yue Jiefei, who was beside them this whole time, let out a deep breath. He pulled out the clumps of cloth from his ear: finally.

A slight breeze was blowing.

Rong Zhi set down the last go piece that finalized the situation, and stood up: "It's about time now."

Because of leaving in a hurry, none of those low tables or silk cushions had been taken up. Chu Yu instructed Yue Jiefei to move the several tables near her, together with the desserts on them, to the pavilion.

Sitting in the pavilion, she faced the slightly strong mountain wind and overlooked the city Jiankang beneath them. This city had a chaotic beauty of prosperity.

Chu Yu was a little dazed. Suddenly, she felt a gentle tug on her sleeve; without needing to look back, she knew it was Liusang. Among all that were here, only he would use such a way to attract her attention.

A soft rumble sounded behind her. Hearing it, Chu Yu turned around in surprise, and only after verifying that this sound came from Liusang's stomach, did Chu Yu remember that she had been eating all the food alone this whole time, while the others had had nothing.

She subconsciously supposed that if Liusang and the others got hungry, they would reach for food themselves, but she forgot the identity of this body and its relationship with them; without her permission, they wouldn't make any move before her.

Smiling and pushing the plate towards Liusang, Chu Yu said: "If you're hungry, just help yourself." Although her tone was gentle, a solitary feeling that even she herself couldn't notice tinted her voice.

But Liusang noticed. He didn't reach for the desserts, instead just gazing at Chu Yu: "Princess, are you not happy? If you're not happy coming out, then let's go back." Then another thought appeared in his head, "Did those people a moment ago make you unhappy?"

Chu Yu smiled, then reached out her hand to pat Liusang's head: "What do those people have to do with me? What do they have, that they could make me unhappy?" Smiling faintly, her gaze extended into the distance, into the pure, clean blue of the ever-extending sky.

Even if she was the Princess of Shanyin now, so what?

What does the destroying of her reputation by others have to do with her?

Huan Yuan, who had been standing beside them, looked towards Chu Yu when he heard this. But all he saw was that elegant young girl with a gaze so calm, an openness he had never seen before.

Chu Yu was just going to say something else, when her body was jerked and pushed aside, followed by Liusang's voice, whose tone almost changed, exclaiming next to her ear: "Careful."

Weapons and blades clashed together, resonating with an ear-piercing sound.

Chu Yu stumbled a few steps and came to Huan Yuan, who was standing in a corner. She held onto a pillar in the pavilion for support, and turned around only to see that several people appeared in the mountain top pavilion some time she

didn't notice. They were all tall, agile, wore bamboo hats, and had on straw rain capes. Chu Yu had no idea when they even sneaked up the mountain.

But what was more important, was that they all had a sword in their hands.

The identity of the newcomers was obvious: they were assassins.

There were a total of five assassins, all dressed uniformly and cooperating excellently; three of them busied Yue Jiefei, while two hopped over him and pounced straight towards Chu Yu, who was in the pavilion.

The shining blades coming close, the air instantly became cold and murderous.

Chu Yu was just going to faint when Liusang blocked right in front of her, and speedily drawing out the dagger in his sleeve, blocked the newcomers. A moment ago, it was also Liusang who pulled her from away the center of the pavilion, and pushed her to the slightly more remote corner.

Seeing that Liusang was so young, the enemy didn't really pay attention, just casually flinging his sword around; but when the sword met the dagger Liusang flicked his wrist, and sharply and accurately cut horizontally across, actually making that person back up a step, while that person's companion came forward and blocked Liusang's slash, or else blood would've already been shed.

The two assassins were both astonished, and after shooting a glance at each other, swung their swords and attacked again. But this time they didn't dare underestimate the enemy anymore.

Chu Yu was also very surprised. She had thought that Liusang was just a child who didn't really know anything, but now, when she looked at his side profile, although it was still young and immature, it could already give off a determined and decisive feeling.

But even though Liusang's swordsmanship was very good, he still lacked experience. So after several matches, one of the assassins found a loophole and broke through his line of defense, and pounced straight towards Huan Yuan and Chu Yu's direction.

[Next Chapter]